File Copy

COMMUNIST CONTROL TECHNIQUES

An Analysis of the Methods Used by Communist State Police in the Arrest, Interrogation, and Indoctrination of Persons Regarded as "Enemies of the State"

(3)(3)

2 APRIL 1956

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

COMMUNIST CONTROL TECHNIQUES

An Analysis of The Methods Used By Communist State Police In The Arrest, Interrogation, and Indoctrination of Persons Regarded as "Enemies of The State"

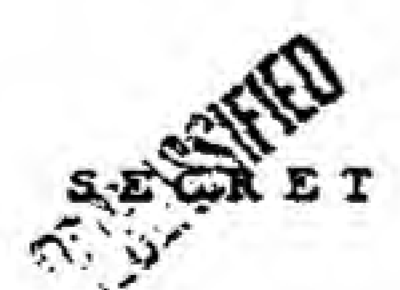
[redacted]

2 APRIL 1956

DECLASSIFIED

SECRET

TABLE OF CONTENTS


DECLASSIFIED


SECRET


DECLASSIFIED
SECRET

MORI DocID: 18246



PART I

Introduction

The Communists are skilled in the extraction of information from prisoners, and in making prisoners do their bidding. It has even appeared that they can force men to confess to crimes which have not been committed and then, apparently, to believe in the truth of their confessions, and express sympathy and gratitude toward those who have imprisoned them. Many have found it hard to understand that the Communists do not possess new and remarkable techniques of psychological manipulation. Some have recalled the extraordinary confessions of men such as Cardinal Mindszenty and William Oatis, and the unusual behavior of the old Bolsheviks at the Purge Trials in the 1930's, and have seen an alarming parallel. These prisoners were men of intelligence, ability and strength of character. They had every reason to oppose their captors. Their confessions were palpably untrue. Such behavior is, if anything, even more difficult to explain than that of some of our prisoners of war in Korea.

The techniques used by the Communists have been the subject of speculation. A number of theories about them have been advanced by psychiatrists and psychologists, [1] most of them based upon some

1. Meerloo, J. A. M., "Pavlovian Strategy as a Weapon of Menticide", Am. J. Psychiat, 110:809, May 1954
See also articles by the same author in Am. J. Psychiat, 107:594, Feb. 1951, in Explorations in Psychoanalysis, New York Julian Press, 1953, and in Conversation and Communication, New York Int. Univ. Press, 1952
Also articles by J.C. Moloney, "Psychic Self-Abandon and Extortion of Confessions, "Int. J. of Psychoanalysis,



modification of the conditioned reflex concepts of I. P. Pavlov, the Russian neurophysiologist. The term "brain washing", originated by a reporter who interviewed Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, [2] has caught the public fancy, and has gained world-wide acceptance. It is now commonly used as a name for the Communist "thought reform" techniques. A number of attempts have been made to provide a scientific definition for this term, which have had the effect of confirming the general impression that "brain washing" is in fact a scientifically designed and highly organized specific technique for the manipulation of human behavior. Many of these speculations about "brain washing" are not supported by the available evidence.

The Communists, however, do make an orderly attempt to obtain information from their prisoners, and to convert their prisoners to forms of behavior and belief acceptable to their captors. They have had some success in their efforts, and this success has had a good deal of propaganda value for them. It has also had some intelligence value for them, for it has yielded valuable information, and it has caused the defection of Americans, both military personnel and civilians. For these reasons, if for no others, it is important that we have as clear an understanding as possible about their methods. The present report describes, therefore, the nature of the interrogation and indoctrination methods which the Communists use, how these methods originated, how they are applied, their effectiveness, their purpose, and their expected use in the future.

36:53, Jan. 1955 and Winokur, G., "Brainwashing' - A Social Phenomenon of Our Time", in Human Organization, 13:16, Winter, 1955

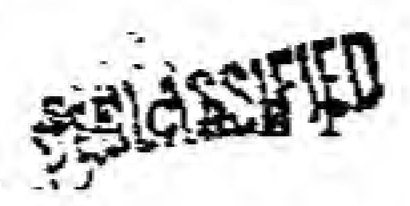
2. Hunter, Edward, Brainwashing in Red China, New York, the Vanguard Press, 1951



The information contained in this report was obtained from a number of sources. Details of the Communist arrest and interrogation systems, and a great deal of information about the purposes, attitudes, and training of those who administer them, were obtained during a series of special interviews with five former Secret Police officials from the Soviet Union and satellite countries. Some of these men were long-term Communists who had occupied important posts in their police apparatus. They had an extensive and detailed knowledge of their profession. Their information was compared with other information about police practices in Communist and non-Communist nations.

Knowledge of the prisoners' reactions to their experiences was obtained by the direct observation of persons recently released from Communist prisons. Some of these observations continued for weeks and were supplemented by follow-up observations over periods of months. They included complete physical, neurological, and psychiatric examinations, and often psychological testing as well. They were supplemented by information supplied by families, friends, and former associates. Among those studied intensively were military and civilian prisoners of diverse ranks and backgrounds, women as well as men, defectors, so-called "turncoats" and resistors, persons "brain washed" and "not brain washed", some who admittedly revealed information and some who said they did not.

In supplement to this, a thorough survey was made of classified government documents. Extensive use has been made of reports of earlier investigations carried out by the Army and the Air Force, and of the material assembled for the Defense Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War. The very large public literature on these subjects has been reviewed also, and drawn upon when it was helpful. Finally, various laboratory



and clinical investigations have been carried out in order to throw light upon the psychological and physiological processes involved in some of the interrogation and indoctrination procedures.

The evidence from each source has been checked against that from the others to provide a basis for the validity of the statements which are made in this report and the conclusions which have been drawn from them, which may be summarized thus:

1. The interrogation methods used by the state police in Communist countries are elaborations and refinements of police practices, many of which were known and used before the Russian Communist Revolution. Scientists did not participate in their design, and do not take part in their execution. Drugs and hypnosis play no significant part in them.

2. The principles and practices used by the Communist state police in the development of suspects, the accumulation of evidence, and the carrying out of arrest, detention, interrogation, trial, and punishment are well known. The effects of these upon prisoners are well known also.

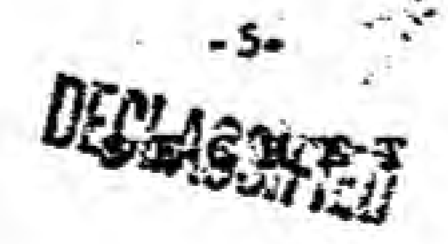
3. The "confessions" obtained by Communist state police are readily understandable as results of the police control pressures used. There is little that is new in their repertoire beyond the extent of application and organization in administering control techniques.

4. Chinese methods of dealing with political prisoners and "enemies of the state" were adapted from those of the Russians.



5. The intensive indoctrination of political prisoners is a practice peculiar to the Chinese Communists. The methods used in this indoctrination are known, and their effects are understandable.

6. Methods can be developed which will help prisoners to withstand some of the effects of the Communist imprisonment-interrogation-indoctrination regimen.





PART II

METHODS OF THE SOVIET STATE POLICE

The imprisonment - interrogation techniques currently employed by the Soviets to obtain confessions of guilt are elaborations and refinements of police and political practices which were known and used before the Russian Communist revolution. Their development is partly determined by certain Communist legal and ideological concepts which differ from those of the West. The following sections describe the various pressures applied to the prisoner by the Soviet State Police, currently known as the KGB*. Incorporated with the description is a discussion of the Communist principle or concept which is the ostensible reason for using each step, and primary attention is given to the reaction of the prisoner to each of the pressures. The methods of the Soviet police are considered in the greatest detail because in large measure they constitute a prototype for those employed by the satellite and Chinese police systems.

* The Soviet secret police system has passed through a number of reorganizations and has appeared under several names. Its present title is KGB (Committee for State Security). In this report the current title is used even though some of the references apply also to predecessors such as the MVD, NKVD, OGPU, etc.

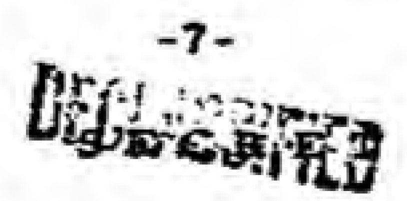


Section 1: The Suspect

Those who fall under the suspicion of the KGB usually have some reason for exciting its suspicion. To the victim himself, such suspicion may appear to be capricious or arbitrary, because he may be utterly unaware of the basis for it. The Russian definition of "crimes against the state" or political crimes is a broad one, and the interpretation of these Russian laws is largely in the hands of the KGB; for all practical purposes it may find reason to suspect anyone. From long practice this organization has developed the thesis that those who conspire against the state will fall into recognized categories. First of all, there are those members of the Communist party who have come under suspicion by the party apparatus, or who have been criticized for failure in some activity. Since "the Party can do no wrong", failure may become the equivalent of sabotage or treason. Secondly, there are those who have travelled abroad or who have had association with foreigners. This, of course, includes all foreigners; but it also includes former prisoners of war, Soviet functionaries who have served abroad, and even members of the KGB itself. Thirdly, members of certain Soviet nationalities which are suspected of nationalist aspirations may also be suspected as a group. The Volga Germans and the Chichen-Ingush are examples. The most recent example was the suspicion cast upon all Jews during the period from 1950 to 1952 when complaints of "cosmopolitanism" were being made against this group. Fourthly, certain segments of Soviet society, such as the "Kulaks" of the early 1930's or the Army in 1937-39 are suspect. Fifth, there are those whose class origin is considered bourgeois or aristocratic. These are fewer in number than they used to be; but they formerly constituted a large group of natural suspects. In times of unrest or mass hysteria, such as occurred during the purge trials or during World War II, all persons in this category became "suspects" and subject to arrest.

Section 1; The Suspect

Those who fall under the suspicion of the KGB usually have some reason for exciting its suspicion. To the victim himself, such suspicion may appear to be capricious or arbitrary, because he may be utterly unaware of the basis for it. The Russian definition of "crimes against the state" or political crimes is a broad one, and the interpretation of these Russian laws is largely in the hands of the KGB; for all practical purposes it may find reason to suspect anyone. From long practice this organization has developed the thesis that those who conspire against the state will fall into recognized categories. First of all, there are those members of the Communist party who have come under suspicion by the party apparatus, or who have been criticized for failure in some activity. Since "the Party can do no wrong", failure may become the equivalent of sabotage or treason. Secondly, there are those who have travelled abroad or who have had association with foreigners. This, of course, includes all foreigners; but it also includes former prisoners of war, Soviet functionaries who have served abroad, and even members of the KGB itself. Thirdly, members of certain Soviet nationalities which are suspected of nationalist aspirations may also be suspected as a group. The Volga Germans and the Chichen-Ingush are examples. The most recent example was the suspicion cast upon all Jews during the period from 1950 to 1952 when complaints of "cosmopolitanism" were being made against this group. Fourthly, certain segments of Soviet society, such as the "Kulaks" of the early 1930's or the Army in 1937-39 are suspect. Fifth, there are those whose class origin is considered bourgeois or aristocratic. These are fewer in number than they used to be; but they formerly constituted a large group of natural suspects. In times of unrest or mass hysteria, such as occurred during the purge trials or during World War II, all persons in this category became "suspects" and subject to arrest.



In addition to these "general suspects", there are "specific suspects", who become such either because suspicion has been cast upon them by one of the many informants among the general population, or because they are relatives, friends, or former associates of other persons who have been arrested or are suspected. Other specific suspects are those who either intentionally or unintentionally have made statements, or carried out acts which the police regard as evidence of criminal, anti-state activity.

The following general assumptions can be made:

(1) Although the suspect may not know why he is suspected, the KGB has some reason for singling him out.

(2) Because of the broad nature of Soviet laws, and the free manner in which the KGB can interpret these, any "suspect" has comitted some "crime against the state" as the KGB defines the term.

The implications of this statement are significant. In a nation in which the state owns all property, where everyone works for the state, and where only approved opinions may be held, a person who has accidentally broken or lost some of the "people's property", who has made a mistake, who has not worked hard enough, who has talked to a foreigner, or who has merely expressed what he inferred was an innocent opinion, may be ipso facto guilty of a "crime against the state." Thus, those who fall into the various categories of "natural suspects" constitute a reservoir of potential victims for the secret police.

Sometimes purely bureaucratic needs within the secret police organization are the occasion for arrest. Since the effectiveness of the organization in the various districts is judged by the number of arrests and convictions obtained, when the leader of a district fears that his organization is falling



behind, he will generate local pressures for more arrests; the victims, of course, will be selected from appropriate groups of suspects. The result of all of this is that many of the victims of the secret police apparatus are seized for reasons quite beyond their own control which are not immediately related to anything that they may have done.

In spite of the fact that the KGB is often taken up with the arrest, interrogation, and punishment of persons whose position is essentially that of potential enemies of the state, it is primarily concerned with the detection and punishment of those who are actively engaged in criminal activities in the Western sense. In dealing with political rebels and foreign agents, it uses the same methods as those which it uses in handling other categories of political prisoners, except that the obviously incriminating evidence with which they are generally picked up greatly simplifies the procedure for extracting a confession.



Section 2: The Accumulation of Evidence

It is an administrative principle of the Soviet government that no one may be arrested unless there is evidence that he is a criminal.

According to the practice of the KGB this means that when a man falls under the suspicion of a KGB officer, this officer must accumulate "evidence" that the man is a "criminal", and take this evidence to the state prosecutor, who must then issue a warrant before the arrest can be carried out. When a man falls under the suspicion of the KGB, an officer in the Investigation Section draws up a plan for the investigation of his case. The plan describes why the man is suspected, who are his suspected associates, what evidence is needed to arrest him, how he shall be placed under surveillance, how the evidence shall be gathered, and how he shall be arrested. This plan is submitted to his superiors for comment, criticism, and approval, and then put into action. One informant estimates that "more than 85%" of those who are thus "formally suspected" are ultimately arrested. The investigating officer accumulates "evidence" by showing that the victim had a reason to be a criminal (i.e., that he was a member of a suspect group) and by accumulating the statements of spies and informants with regard to him. If this "evidence" is not sufficient to satisfy the officer, he places the suspect and the suspect's friends and associates under surveillance. These friends and associates may be held for interrogation in order to supply evidence against the suspect, the reason for their seizure being that they are associates of a suspect, and therefore suspect themselves.

Covert surveillance and the arrest of associates are carried out carefully, but they cannot always be concealed from the suspect. He may become aware of it, or his friends may tell him. As he becomes a marked man in the eyes of his friends, they begin to avoid him. Their demeanor sometimes indicates to him that he is under suspicion. The knowledge that he will be arrested, without knowledge of when this will occur, obviously creates anxiety in the intended



victim. Although KGB officers know about the psychological effect which surveillance has upon suspects, and make use of it, they do not use it with the calculated cunning that the victim sometimes supposes. Poorly concealed surveillance, and the arrest of friends and associates, followed after an indefinite period by the arrest of the main suspect, are not necessarily stage maneuvers to frighten the victim. Often they are simply evidence of rather slow and clumsy police activities.

Members of the KGB compete with one another in trying to turn up suspects and secure their conviction. To a certain extent, officers are judged by the number of arrests which they obtain. Since Soviet "principles" demand that no person be arrested except when it is clear that he is a criminal, officers who arrest men who must later be released are subject to censure. They have made a mistake, because they have arrested a man who is not a criminal.

The consequences are important from the point of view of the victim. In effect, any man who is arrested is automatically in the position of being "guilty". * If the "evidence" should be insufficient to substantiate his guilt, those in charge of his case are subject to censure. In theory, those making the arrest should have accumulated beforehand sufficient evidence of guilt to satisfy both their superior officers and the state prosecutor. It is usually not difficult to satisfy these officials. Nevertheless, this requirement for sufficient evidence of guilt puts pressure upon

* A discussion of the Communist concept of "guilt and the meaning of this term to KGB officers is presented in Section 16 (Part II).

the junior officersof the KGB who are anxious to establish a reputation for themselves, and sometimes they may falsify the "evidence" which they present to the prosecutor. This is a forbidden practice, for which the offending officer could be punished if he were "officially" found out. The officers who took part in staging the famous "doctor's plot" of 1952 were punished later for "falsifying the evidence". But when the KGB is under pressure to secure convictions, and when this pressure comes from high in the Party, "falsification of evidence", like the use of physical brutality in obtaining confessions, may be a widespread procedure. It is never "officially" condoned.

Anyone arrested by the KGB must know that in the eyes of the Soviet state, and in the eyes of those who have arrested him, he is a "criminal". The only question to be settled after his arrest is the extent of his criminal activity and the precise nature of his crimes. The officers in charge of his case, both those who have made the arrest and those who will carry out the interrogation, have a personal interest in seeing that the arrested man makes a prompt and extensive confession; for their own reputations are at stake.





Section 3: The Arrest Procedure

It is a Communist principle that men should be arrested in a manner which will not cause them embarrassment, and that the police should carry out arrests in a manner which will not unduly disturb the population.

In the United States, it is said that a man is "arrested" when the police seize him, detain him, or otherwise deprive him of his freedom; and the United States law requires that the police obtain a "warrant" or comply with certain other legal procedures before carrying out an arrest. In the Soviet Union the KGB may obtain a "warrant" from the state prosecutor before seizing a man, but it is not required to do so. It may "det. in" a man on suspicion, and interrogate him "to see if he is a criminal". What would be called "arrest" in the U.S. may be carried out in the Soviet Union with or without a warrant. The process of seizure is the same in either case.

For more than twenty years it has been the practice of the Russian State Police to seize their suspects in the middle of the night. The "midnight knock on the door" has become a standard episode in fiction about Russia. The police are well aware of the fact that the intended victim, forewarned by his previous surveillance and the changing attitude of his friends, is further terrified by the thought that he may be awakened from his sleep almost any night and taken away. The official explanation for the nighttime arrests is that such a procedure avoids the embarrassment and alarm which would be created if the victim were seized in the daytime. It is customary for the arresting officer to be accompanied by several other men. He usually reads to the prisoner the arrest warrant if there is one. It does not, of course, specify the details of the crimes committed. The prisoner is then taken promptly to a detention prison.

An alternate method of arrest, for which the same official explanation is given, is to carry out the procedure in a city not the home of the suspect. In order to accomplish this, men under suspicion are ordered by their superiors to travel on some pretext or other. Before the victim reaches his destination, he is arrested and taken from the train. A third method, said to be preferred when there is no warrant, is to seize the victim suddenly as he walks down the street. All of these procedures create intense anxiety in the victim; and in the population at large they create all of the alarm which may be generated by the sudden and unexplained disappearance of an individual from the midst of his family and friends.





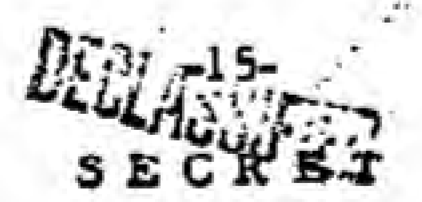
Section 4: The Detention Prison

According to Soviet administrative principles, a man who is arrested by the State Police is not "imprisoned". He is merely "detained". In theory, he is detained in a quiet, healthy atmosphere where he has an opportunity to meditate upon his crimes, and a chance to talk them over freely and at length with police officers, without being prejudiced by friends, associates, or lawyers who might induce him to distort the truth.

In most of the large cities of the Soviet Union the KGB operates detention prisons. These prisons contain only persons under "investigation", whose cases have not yet been "settled". The most modern of these prisons are separate institutions, well built and spotlessly clean. In addition to the cells for the prisoners, they contain offices for the KGB units, rooms in which interrogations are carried out, and other rooms, usually in the basement, in which prisoners are executed when such punishment is decided upon. There are attached medical facilities, and rooms for the care of the sick detainees. An exercise yard is a standard facility. In outlying areas or undeveloped regions, the KGB may occupy a separate wing of a general prison, and use this as a detention prison. Facilities in these areas may be ancient or inadequate, depending upon what is available; but the detention wing itself is administered separately from that of the rest of the prison, and prisoners under detention are segregated from general prisoners.

Most of the cells in Soviet detention prisons are designed for one occupant. The typical cell is a small cubicle, about 10 ft. long by 6 ft. wide, containing a single bunk and a slop jar. It usually has no other furnishings. Its walls are barren, and it is lighted by a single electric lamp in the ceiling. One wall usually contains a small window above eye level, from which the prisoner can see nothing of his outside environment.

The door contains a peephole through which the guard in the corridor outside may observe the prisoner at will without the prisoner's knowledge.



There also may be cells which are large enough to hold two or more prisoners. Except for size, such cells are not different from the others. In general, prisoners whose cases are relatively unimportant, those against whom the evidence is "complete", and those who have indicated a willingness to talk freely, are placed in cells with other prisoners, some of whom are usually informers. Those whose cases are important or "incomplete", those from whom information is desired, and those for whom public trials or propaganda confessions are planned, are put in solitary confinement.

Such typical cells will not, of course, be found in all prisons, and especially not in those which are old or improvised; but the general aspect of barrenness and complete lack of access to the outside world is characteristic.

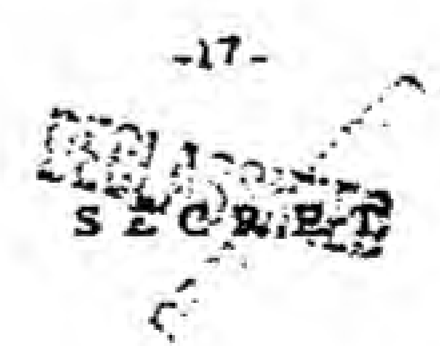
Section 5: The Regimen within the Detention Prison

The arresting officers usually do not give the prisoner any reason for his arrest beyond that in the warrant which they read to him. They usually search him, and also search the place in which he lives. They then take him directly to the prison. Here he is asked a few questions about his identity, and his personal valuables and outer clothing are taken from him. These are carefully catalogued and put away.* He may or may not be given a prison uniform. He is usually examined by a prison physician shortly after his incarceration.

The entire introduction to the detention prison is brief and is carried on without explanation. Within a few hours after his arrest the prisoner finds himself locked up within a cell.

An almost invariable feature of the management of any important suspect under detention is a period of total isolation in a detention cell. The prisoner is placed within his cell, the door is shut, and for an indefinite period he is totally isolated from human contact except by the specific direction of the officer in charge of his case. He is not allowed to talk to the guards or to communicate with other prisoners in any manner. When he is taken from his cell for any reason he is accompanied by a guard. If another prisoner approaches through the corridor he turns his face to the wall until the other prisoner has passed.

* It is an interesting comment on the "legalistic" behavior of the KGB that prisoners who have been detained, interrogated, tortured, imprisoned at length, and ultimately released after many years, may then receive all of their original clothing and personal valuables, which have been scrupulously cared for during their imprisonment.



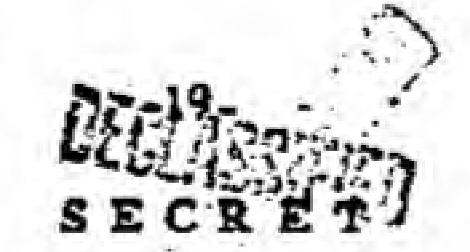
The hours and routine of the prisoner are rigidly organized. He is awakened early in the morning and given a short period in which to wash himself. His food is brought to him. He has a short and fixed time in which to eat it; the standard diet is just adequate to maintain nutrition. He must clean himself and police his own cell; but he is not allowed enough time to keep it spotlessly clean. At some time in the morning he usually has an exercise period. Typically, his exercise consists of walking alone in the exercise yard. If he is in rigid isolation, he may not be allowed to exercise at all. He is usually allowed a slop jar in his cell which he can utilize for defecation and urination, but sometimes this is taken away. Then he must call the guard and perhaps wait for hours to be taken to the latrine.

At all times except when he is eating, sleeping, exercising, or being interrogated, the prisoner is left strictly alone in his cell. He has nothing to do, nothing to read, and no one to talk to. Under the strictest regimen he may have to sit or stand in his cell in a fixed position all day. He may sleep only at hours prescribed for sleep. Then he must go to bed promptly when told, and must lie in a fixed position upon his back with his hands outside the blanket. If he deviates from this position, the guard outside will awaken him and make him resume it. The light in his cell burns constantly. He must sleep with his face constantly toward it.

If the prisoner becomes ill, he is taken to a prison physician, by whom he is treated with the best medical care available, according to the practices common to Soviet medicine. If necessary he may be placed under hospital care; but as soon as he has recovered the regimen will be resumed.

Prisoners who attempt to commit suicide are thwarted and carefully nursed until they recover; then the regimen is resumed.

Deviations from the prescribed regimen are promptly noticed by the guards and are punished. Disturbed behavior is punished also. If this behavior persists and the officer in charge of the case is convinced that the prisoner has become mentally ill, the man may be placed under medical care until his health has returned; then the regimen is resumed.





Section 6: The Effects of the Regimen in the Isolation Cell

The effects of this regimen upon prisoners are striking.* It has been mentioned that the man who has been arrested by the KGB is usually intensely apprehensive. Often he has known for weeks that he would be arrested, but has had no clear knowledge of when, or for what reason. He has been seized in the middle of the night and taken without explanation to a formidable prison. He knows that no friend can help him, and that the KGB may do with him what they please.

A major aspect of his prison experience is isolation. Man is a social animal; he does not live alone. From birth to death, he lives in the company of his fellow men. When he is totally isolated, he is removed from all of the interpersonal relations which are so important to him, and taken out of the social role which sustains him. His internal as well

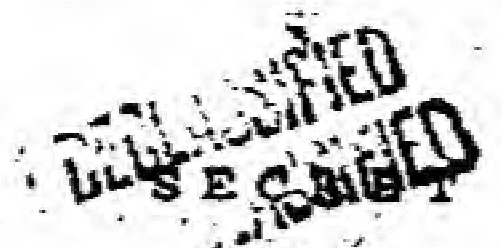
*The reaction to be described in this and the following sections is that of a "typical" man, previously untrained, who has never been imprisoned or isolated before, and who has been arrested for a serious, but not specified, crime against the state of which he could be "guilty". Even among such men, there are wide differences in the capacity to tolerate the isolation regimen. Some become demoralized within a few days, while others are able to retain a high degree of self control for months. In addition tothis, most men possess the capacity to adapt to isolation, and those who experience the isolation regimen a second time almost always tolerate it better, and longer. Previous training and the circumstances of seizure are important also. Untrained men seized in flagrante delicto may be rapidly disorganized; while those convinced of their innocence and familiar with KGB methods may be able to stand up under isolation for a long time.

as his external life is disrupted. Exposed for the first time to total isolation in a KGB prison, he develops a predictable group of symptoms, which might almost be called a "disease syndrome". The guards and KGB officers are quite familiar with this syndrome. They watch each new prisoner with technical interest as his symptoms develop.

The initial appearance of an arrested prisoner is one of bewilderment. For a few hours he may sit quietly in his cell looking confused and dejected. But within a short time most prisoners become alert, and begin to take an interest in their environment. They react with expectancy when anyone approaches the door to the cell. They show interest and anxiety as they are exposed to each new feature of the prison routine. They may ask questions or begin conversations. Some make demands: they demand to know why they are being held, and protest that they are innocent. If they are foreign nationals, they may insist upon seeing their consular officers. Some take a "you can't do this to me attitude." Some pass through a brief period of shouting, threatening, and demanding. All of this is always sternly repressed. If need be, the officer in charge of the case will see the prisoner, remind him of the routine, threaten him with punishment, and punish him if he does not subside.* During this period the prisoner has not yet appreciated the full import of his situation. He tries to fraternize with the guards. He leaves part of his food if he does not like it. He tries to speak to prisoners whom he passes in the corridors, and reaches back to close the door behind him when he is taken to the latrine. The guards refer to this as the period of getting "acclimatized" to the prison routine.

* The punishments used are described on pages 25-27





After a few days it becomes apparent to the prisoner that his activity avails him nothing, and that he will be punished or reprimanded for even the smallest breaches of the routine. He wonders when he will be released or questioned. His requests have been listened to but never acted upon. He becomes increasingly anxious and restless, and his sleep is disturbed. He begins to look up alertly when anyone passes in the corridor. He jumps when the guard comes to the door. He becomes "adjusted" to the routine in his cell, and goes through it punctiliously; but he still leaves some of his food, and occasionally he reveals by small gestures his lack of complete submission to his environment.

The period of anxiety, hyperactivity and apparent adjustment to the isolation routine usually continues from 1 to 3 weeks. As it continues, the prisoner becomes increasingly dejected and dependent. He gradually gives up all spontaneous activity within his cell, and ceases to care about his personal appearance and actions. Finally, he sits and stares with a vacant expression, perhaps endlessly twisting a button on his coat. He allows himself to become dirty and disheveled. When food is presented to him, he eats it all but he no longer bothers with the niceties of eating. He may mix it into a mush and stuff it into his mouth like an animal. He goes through the motions of his prison routine automatically, as if he were in a daze. The slop jar is no longer offensive to him. Ultimately he seems to lose many of the restraints of ordinary behavior. He may soil himself. He weeps, he mutters, and he prays aloud in his cell. He follows the orders of the guard with the docility of a trained animal. Indeed, the guards say that such prisoners are "reduced to animals". They estimate that in the average case it will take from 4 to 6 weeks of rigid, total isolation to produce this phenomenon in a newly imprisoned man.



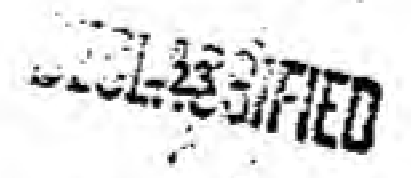
SECRET

Section 7: The Feelings and Attitudes of the Prisoner During the Isolation Regimen

The man who for the first time experiences isolation in prison is, of course, experiencing far more than simple isolation. He usually feels profoundly anxious, helpless, frustrated, dejected, and entirely uncertain about his future. His initial reaction to the isolation procedure is indeed one of bewilderment and some numbness at the calamity which has befallen him. This is followed by a period of interest and apprehension about every detail of the prison regimen, accompanied by hope that he can explain everything as soon as he gets a chance, or an expectation that he will be released when the proper authorities hear about his plight. Such hopes last but a few days, but they keep him alert and interested during that time.

As hope disappears, a reaction of anxious waiting supervenes. In this period, the profound boredom and complete loneliness of his situation gradually overwhelm the prisoner. There is literally nothing for him to do except ruminate and because he has so much to worry about, his ruminations are seldom pleasant. Frequently, they take the form of going over and over all the possible causes for his arrest. His mood becomes one of dejection. His sleep is disturbed by nightmares. Ultimately he may reach a state of depression in which he ceases to care about his personal appearance and behavior and pays little attention to his surroundings. In this state the prisoner may have illusory experiences. A distant sound in the corridor sounds like someone calling his name. The rattle of a footstep may be interpreted as a key in the lock opening the cell.

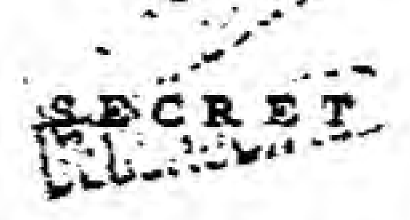
Some prisoners may become delirious and have visual hallucinations. God may appear to such



a prisoner and tell him to cooperate with his interrogator. He may see his wife standing beside him, or a servant bringing him a large meal. In nearly all cases the prisoner's need for human companionship and his desire to talk to anyone about anything becomes a gnawing appetite. If he is given an opportunity to talk, he may say anything which seems to be appropriate, or to be desired by his listener; for in his confused and befuddled state he may be unable to tell what is "actually true" from what "might be" or "should be" true. He may be highly suggestible, and may "confabulate" the details of any story suggested to him.

Not all men who first experience total isolation react in precisely this manner. In some, these symptoms are less conspicuous. Others, especially those with pre-existing personality disturbances, may become frankly psychotic. However, frank psychotic manifestations, other than those of the "prison psychosis" described above, are not usual, primarily because those having charge of the prisoners usually break the routine of total isolation when they see that disorganization of the prisoner's personality is imminent.

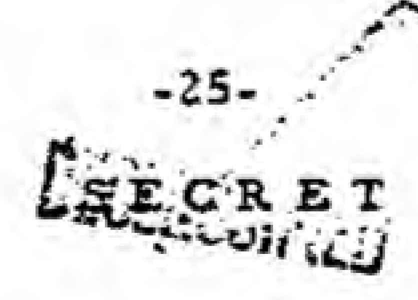




Section 8: Other Pressures of the Isolation Regimen

Not all of the reaction to this imprisonment experience can be attributed to isolation alone. Other potent forces are acting upon the newly imprisoned man. The prisoner's anxiety about himself is compounded by worry about what may happen to his friends and associates, and, in the case of those who possess information which they wish to hide, apprehension about how much the KGB knows or will find out. Even in the absence of isolation, profound and uncontrolled anxiety is disorganizing. Uncertainty compounds his anxiety also. The newly arrested prisoner does not know how long he will be confined, how he will be punished, or with what he will be charged. He does know that his punishment may be anything up to death or permanent imprisonment. Many prisoners say that uncertainty is the most unbearable aspect of the whole experience. Sleep disturbances and nightmares lead to further fear and fatigue.

The effects of isolation, uncertainty and anxiety are usually sufficient to make the prisoner eager to talk to his interrogator and to seek some method of escape from a situation which has become intolerable. But, if these alone are not enough to produce the desired effect, the officer in charge has other simple and highly effective ways of applying pressure. Two of the most effective of these are fatigue and lack of sleep. The constant light in the cell and the necessity of maintaining a rigid position in bed compound the effects of anxiety and nightmares in producing sleep disturbances. If these are not enough, it is easy to have the guards awaken the prisoner at intervals. This is especially effective if the prisoner is always awakened as soon as he drops off to sleep. The guards can also shorten the hours available for sleep, or deny sleep altogether. Continued loss of sleep produces clouding of consciousness and a loss of alertness, both of which impair the victim's ability to sustain isolation. It also produces profound fatigue.



Another simple and effective type of pressure is that of maintaining the temperature of the cell at a level which is either too hot or too cold for comfort. Continuous heat, at a level at which constant sweating is necessary in order to maintain body temperature, is enervating and fatigue producing. Sustained cold is uncomfortable and poorly tolerated. Yet another method of creating pressure is to reduce the food ration to the point at which the prisoner is constantly hungry. This usually involves loss of weight, which is often associated with weakness and asthenia. Furthermore, deprivation of food produces lassitude, loss of general interest and some breakdown of courage. Some people become profoundly depressed when deprived of food.

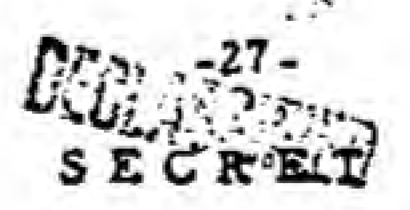
The effects of isolation, anxiety, fatigue, lack of sleep, uncomfortable temperatures, and chronic hunger produce disturbances of mood, attitudes, and behavior in nearly all prisoners. The living organism cannot entirely withstand such assaults. The Communists do not look upon these assaults as "torture". Undoubtedly, they use the methods which they do in order to conform, in a typical legalistic manner to overt Communist principles which demand that "no force or torture be used in extracting information from prisoners." But these methods do, of course, constitute torture and physical coercion. All of them lead to serious disturbances of many bodily processes.

Section 9: The Interrogator

The KGB officer who has charge of a case during the period of suspicion, surveillance and arrest is now supplanted by another officer who is charged with the interrogation of the prisoners and the preparation of the deposition. (Prisoners commonly refer to this document as the "confession".)

Within the KGB assignments to interrogation are not highly regarded. Most KGB officers prefer to go into offensive espionage or to join paramilitary units. Relatively few of them wish to become involved in political counterespionage, investigation and interrogation. Such work is not looked upon as glamorous or exciting. Very often it involves assignment to outlying and relatively dull regions of the Soviet Union, and usually it is hard and thankless. The interrogation of prisoners is a tiring and an emotionally trying procedure. Thus, there is often deficiency of applicants for work in this section of the secret police and local district officers of the KGB must assign men to fill the necessary quota at the state police school. KGB officers from other branches of the service have reported to us that the assignment is often given to the least desirable men in the organization - "the eight ball", as one officer said. It can be assumed that a majority of those involved in the investigation and interrogation of unimportant prisoners are men of average ability with no great enthusiasm for their job. However, the KGB does also possess highly skilled, well educated, extremely knowledgeable, experienced and able interrogators who are devoted to their profession and proud of their abilities. The interrogator assigned to an important prisoner can be expected to be a man of such high caliber.

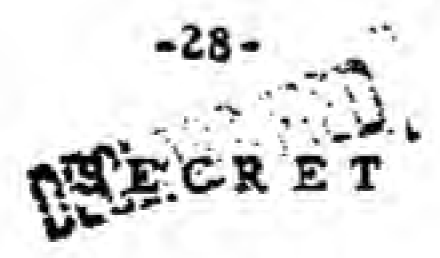
Some of those who go into secret police activity receive only a sort of "on the job" training under the guidance of more senior and experienced men; but a fair proportion of these police officers





are especially trained at a KGB school near Moscow. This school has been in existence for at least 15 years. It gives a course of two years duration. The curriculum includes courses in the history of the Soviet Government, the governmental structure of the Soviet Union and of Capitalist countries, the external policy of the Soviet Union, the development of court procedures in the U.S.S.R. and in Capitalist countries, Soviet law, and Soviet criminal procedures, both political and civil. There are technical courses in criminology, techniques of investigation and surveillance, the use of audio devices, the recruitment of informers, and the accumulation of evidence. Some of the advanced lectures in history, law and criminology are given by visiting lecturers from Soviet universities. For students who lack higher education, the school offers courses in geography, history, Russian literature and so on. There is, of course, a great deal of study of Communism, and of the history of the Communist Party, which is regarded as a most important part of the curriculum.

The course in the conduct of interrogations includes a description of the various interrogation methods that will be discussed shortly. Trainees are allowed to observe a demonstration interrogation but do not actually conduct interrogations themselves. No formal training in psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology or physiology is included in the curriculum. There are no representatives of any of these sciences on the faculty and, as far as we have been able to ascertain, there never have been. Trainees do receive information from experienced police officers on how to prepare a dossier, how to "size up" a man, and how to estimate what sort of methods to use in "breaking" him; but the instructors draw entirely upon police experience. They have a contempt for theoretical psychiatry and psychology, and for instruments such as the polygraph.



Section 10: Interrogation

When the prisoner has been arrested and incarcerated in his cell the officer in charge of his case submits to his superiors a plan for the interrogation of the prisoner. This plan is drawn up on the basis of what is already known about the prisoner. It describes the methods to be used upon him, the attitudes to be taken toward him, the type of information which it is expected that he will reveal, and the type of crimes which he is believed to have committed and the assumed motivation for them. His superiors may criticize or comment upon this plan and offer added suggestions based upon their own experience. The purpose of this plan appears to be primarily that of making the interrogator approach the prisoner with a definite conception of what he wants to do, and how he is going to proceed in doing it. The plan need not be adhered to rigidly if the development of the case indicates that changes should be made ( ) In some prisons the interrogator reviews the plan with his superiors after each session and describes to them how he intends to conduct the next session.

( ) One former Communist police officer describes the plan thus: "Before any interrogation takes place there is a plan which is worked out together with the interrogator and the representative of the operation section which handles the case, and it is divided into three plans: (1) Case plan identification and assumed motivation for the crime. (2) A statement from the operation section of what the defendant is to confess to and (3) A description of what the operation section would like to prove through the case. The third part is why the case has to be proved and what is to be proved - an attempt is made to have any individual crime woven into a larger pattern of crime against the Communist Party."



If a prisoner indicates at the time he is seized that he is aware of his guilt and is prepared to describe his crimes, the interrogator may begin to question him very soon after his imprisonment. This is true especially when the police already possess a great deal of "evidence" and the prisoner readily confesses to the "crimes" which the interrogator wishes to establish.

Likewise, if the prisoner is seized without a warrant, the interrogator is likely to begin the questioning early. Soviet law specifies that if a man is "detained on suspicion" the first protocol of his interrogation must be given to the state prosecutor within ten days so that an arrest warrant may be issued or the man may be released. In general, interrogators are constrained to comply with this regulation, and they try to produce enough evidence to obtain an arrest within ten days. In many such cases, because they have little except suspicion to guide their questioning, they are necessarily vague in describing the prisoner's crimes to him. They must be cautious lest the prisoner get wind of what they want him to say and refuse to say it. It is probably this, more than any calculated cunning, which causes them to make to the prisoner such enigmatic statements as, "It is not up to me to tell you what your crimes are; it is up to you to tell me" - statements which lead the perplexed prisoner to rack his brain for an answer. The prosecutor is not hard to satisfy, and the interrogator nearly always obtains enough evidence to make an "arrest". If not, he can apply for an extension of the detention period.

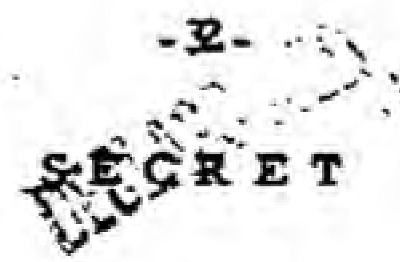
The law provides no real protection for the prisoner. KGB officers among our informants estimated that "more than 99%" of those who are seized are ultimately convicted and punished.

Interrogations, once begun, are continued until "the case is complete", but in some circumstances they are intentionally delayed in their onset. It appears that this delay is imposed when the prisoner is defiant, when he is thought to be withholding information, when the KGB is seeking a confession to crimes other than those for which it has "evidence", and especially when it wants to use the prisoner for a public trial or to obtain a propaganda confession from him. In such cases, the interrogation begins when the officer in charge feels that the prisoner is ripe for it. This is usually when he observes that the prisoner has become docile and compliant and shows evidence of deterioration in his mood and personal appearance.

Interrogations are almost uniformly carried out at night. It is said that this practice of night interrogation originated not from any preconceived idea of its effectiveness, but because the early Chekists were so overburdened with police duties during the day that they could find time for interrogations only at night. For one reason or another, it has become standard procedure, possibly because the physical and psychological effect of night interrogations produces added pressure upon the prisoner. He is deprived of sleep and placed in a state of added uncertainty by never knowing when he will be awakened and questioned. Typically, he will be awakened suddenly by the guard shortly after he has dropped off to sleep. Without explanation he is taken from his cell and down several corridors, to a small and barren interrogation room equipped with a desk and chair for the interrogator and a stool for the prisoner. The lighting is arranged so that the prisoner can be placed in a bright light, while the interrogator sits in relative darkness. Sometimes a stenographer is present in one corner of the room to take notes. More often the interrogator makes his own notes, writing as the prisoner speaks. Usually only one interrogator is present but occasionally other officers are introduced. Sometimes interrogators alternate, for psychological reasons, one being "friendly" and the other "hostile". If his work is successful, the original interrogator may carry the case through to a conclusion, but if he does not achieve the desire goal,

he may be removed and a new officer takes over the interrogation.

The atmosphere of the interrogation room generally has some degree of formality about it. The interrogator may be dressed in full uniform. If he wishes to impress the prisoner, he may take out a pistol, cock it, and lay it on the desk before him; but this psychological gambit does not seem to be a required part of the protocol. The interrogator adjusts his attitude toward the prisoner according to his estimate of the kind of man he is facing. If the dossier indicates that the prisoner is a timid and fearful man, the interrogator may adopt a fierce and threatening demeanor. If the prisoner is thought to be proud and sensitive, the interrogator may be insulting and degrading. If the prisoner has been a man of prestige and importance in private life, the interrogator may call him by his first name, treat him as an inferior and remind him that he has lost all rank and privilege. If the prisoner is thought to be suggestible, the interrogator will try to influence him by suggestion. If the prisoner is known as venal and self-seeking, the interrogator may try to bribe him with promises of reward for cooperation. If the prisoner has a tendency to blame others, the interrogator may try to let him place the blame upon others while describing his own activities as harmless. If the prisoner is known to have a wife and children for whom he cares deeply, the interrogator may threaten harm to them if the prisoner does not cooperate, and promise to protect and help them if he does. If it is known that the prisoner has been unfaithful to his wife or has committed some crime such as embezzlement, the interrogator may blackmail him by threatening exposure or punishment unless he cooperates. All these and many other tricks may be employed. They are not based upon a scientific theory of human behavior; they are tricks of the trade, so to speak, developed out of police



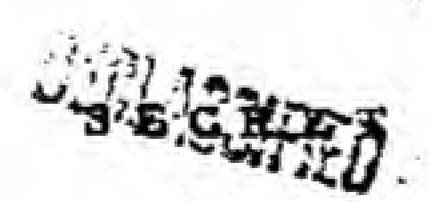
experience and applied on a "rule of thumb", "common sense" basis.

Almost invariably the interrogator takes the attitude that the prisoner is guilty and acts as though all of his crimes are known. Almost invariably he points out to the prisoner that he is completely helpless, and that there is no hope for him unless he cooperates fully, and confesses his crimes completely. Almost never does the interrogator state specifically what the prisoner's crimes actually are. This is left up to the prisoner, who is told, in effect, that he knows the extent of his own crimes, and need only make a complete statement of them.

Almost invariably the interrogator does not accept the early statement of the prisoner. No matter what crimes he confesses, the interrogator forces the prisoner to repeat his statements again and again, and to elaborate on them endlessly. Almost always he uses any discrepancies as indications of lying, and questions the prisoner at length about them.

The first interrogation sessions are nearly always concerned with a complete review of the entire life experience of the prisoner. The interrogator wishes to know about the prisoner's background, his class origin, his parents, brothers and sisters, his friends and associates, and everything that he has done throughout his life. If the case is of any importance, no detail is overlooked, and every period of the prisoner's life must be accounted for.

This review of the prisoner's life may occupy several interrogation sessions. It has several purposes. The primary one is to complete the prisoner's dossier. Furthermore, requiring a man to account for every detail of his life produces a voluminous and involved story, and the prisoner can scarcely avoid

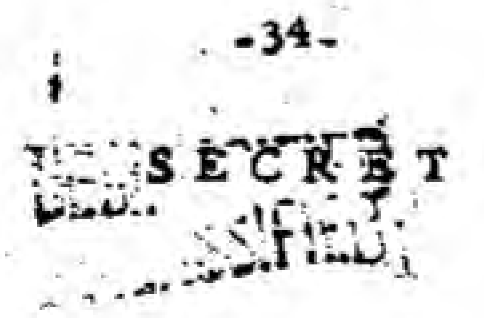


being trapped into inconsistencies if he is concealing anything. The information obtained from the life history can be compared with that already in the police files, which are usually extensive. It enables the police to know the associates of the prisoner, which is important, because these may be his "accomplices in crime", who can be made suspects also, and interrogated for further information.

Perhaps its most important purpose is that it reveals many "criminal" features of the prisoner such as Reactionary class origin, membership in Reactionary organizations and association with enemies of the state, which are, by Communist definition "crimes" no matter how long ago they were committed.

The prisoner, taken from his cell after a long period of isolation, anxiety and despair, usually looks upon the first interrogation as a welcome break. The mere opportunity to talk to someone is intensely gratifying. Many prisoners have reported that after long periods of isolation they eagerly anticipate interrogation sessions and try to prolong them simply for the companionship which they afford. Not infrequently the prisoner also regards interrogation as an opportunity to justify himself, and feels a false assurance that he can "explain everything" as soon as he is given a chance.

Usually he is much taken aback by the fact that his crimes are not specified, and that his guilt is assumed. He is further distressed when his protestations of innocence are greeted as lies. But the opportunity to talk about his life experiences is generally looked upon, especially by a person from Western society, as an opportunity to justify his behavior. Many men willingly divulge all that they can remember about



themselves because they feel quite sure that they have done nothing which may be regarded as criminal. They are unaware that, from the point of view of Communist legal theory and of the KGB much of their past behavior undoubtedly will be construed as "criminal" and held against them. If the interrogator offers them the opportunity to have paper and pencil in their cells and to write out their biographies, they seize upon this avidly as a means of relieving the boredom of the tedious, lonely routine to which they are exposed.

Section 11: Pressures Applied by The Interrogator

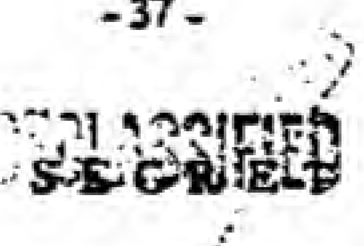
As the interrogation proceeds, the interrogator changes his behavior according to his previous plan and the development of the case. If the prisoner is cooperating and talking freely, the interrogator continues to show a relatively friendly attitude. But sooner or later he invariably expresses dissatisfaction with the information which the prisoner has given, no matter how complete it may be. He demands new details, and usually shows an especially great interest in the "accomplices" of the prisoner and the "organization" to which he is supposed to have been attached. When the prisoner protests that he has told all, and denies any other crimes or accomplices, the interrogator becomes hostile and begins to apply pressure.

Some of the pressures which can be applied simply by altering the routine within the cell have been described. The interrogator has many others at his command. Continuous and repetitive interrogation is an effective and very common form of pressure. Another which is widely used is that of requiring the prisoner to stand throughout the interrogation session or to maintain some other physical position which becomes painful. This, like other features of the KGB procedure, is a form of physical torture, in spite of the fact that the prisoners and KGB officers alike do not ordinarily perceive it as such. Any fixed position which is maintained over a long period of time ultimately produces excruciating pain. Certain positions, of which the standing position is one, also produces impairment of the circulation. Many men can withstand the pain of long standing, but sooner or later all men succumb to the circulatory failure it produces. After 18 to 24 hours of continuous standing, there is an accumulation of fluid in the tissues of the

legs. This dependent "edema" is produced by fluid from the blood vessels. The ankles and feet of the prisoner swell to twice their normal circumference. The edema may rise up the legs as high as the middle of the thighs. The skin becomes tense and intensely painful. Large blisters develop which break and exude watery serum. The accumulation of the body fluid in the legs produces an impairment of the circulation. The heart rate increases and fainting may occur. Eventually there is a renal shutdown, and urine production ceases. The prisoner becomes thirsty, and may drink a good deal of water, which is not excreted, but adds to the edema of his legs. Men have been known to remain standing for periods as long as several days. Ultimately they usually develop a delirious state, characterized by disorientation, fear, delusions, and visual hallucinations. This psychosis is produced by a combination of circulatory impairment, lack of sleep, and uremia.

Periods of long standing are usually interrupted from time to time by interrogation periods during which the interrogator demands and threatens, while pointing out to the prisoner that it would be easy for him to end his misery merely by cooperating.

In addition to the physiological effects, this type of torture creates a psychological conflict. When the prisoner is required to stand in one position, there is often engendered within him an initial determination to "stick it out". This internal act of resistance provides a feeling of moral superiority, at first. As time passes and the pain mounts, the individual becomes aware that, to some degree, it is his own original determination to resist that is causing the continuance of pain. There develops a conflict within the individual between his moral determination and his desire to collapse and discontinue the pain. It is this extra internal conflict, in addition to the conflict over whether or not to give in to the demands made of him, that tends to make this

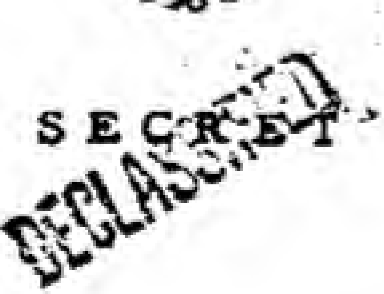


method of torture so effective in the breakdown of the individual.

The KGB hardly ever uses manacles or chains, and rarely resorts to physical beatings. The actual physical beating is, of course, repugnant to overt Communist principles, and is contrary to KGB regulations also. The ostensible reason for these regulations is that they are contrary to Communist principles. The practical reason for them is the fact that the KGB looks upon direct physical brutality as an ineffective method of obtaining the compliance of the prisoner. Its opinion in this regard is shared by police in other parts of the world. In general, direct physical brutality creates only resentment, hostility, and further defiance.

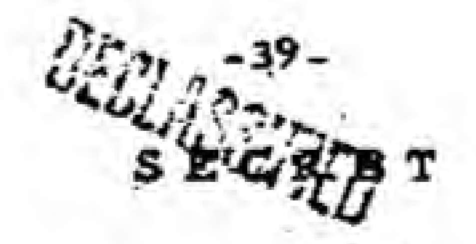
It is a general policy that the interrogator must obtain the written permission of his superiors before using extreme coercive measures of any sort upon prisoners. In actual practice such permission is sought only if the officer in charge of a case feels that there is a need for a direct brutal assault. The KGB recognizes that some men who are intensely afraid of physical assault may break down if beaten once or twice, and it does use this procedure deliberately, though uncommonly. Generally speaking, when an interrogator strikes a prisoner in anger he does so "unofficially". The act may be a true expression of his exasperation and evidence that he, himself, is under emotional strain.

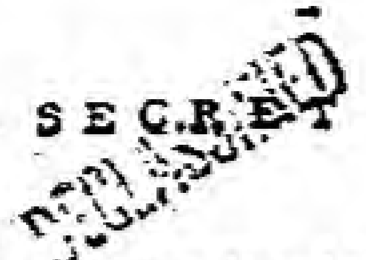
KGB officers report that the use of brutality in the Russian secret police waxes and wanes in cycles that recur throughout the years. When feelings of insecurity develop within those holding power, they become increasingly suspicious and put great pressures upon the secret police to obtain arrests and confessions. At such times police officials are inclined to condone anything which produces a speedy



"confession", and brutality may become fairly widespread. Later, when suspiciousness subsides, demands arise for "reform" and the cessation of "irregular practices" by the secret police.

Regardless of brutality, it can be taken for granted that some period of intense pressure and coercion will be applied to every prisoner, no matter how cooperative he tries to be at first. This period of pressure will be accompanied by expressions of displeasure and hostility from the interrogator, and sometimes from the guards also. It appears to be a working principle of the KGB that no man ever reveals everything voluntarily. It has been a universal experience of prisoners of Communist state police that no matter how much a man tells, he is always pressed to tell more - in fact, those who talk most are often the ones who are hounded the longest. Men who immediately, and without pressure, volunteer all that they know do not thus allay the suspicions of their interrogator. Eventually, when their flow of information runs out, and persuasion yields no more, they find themselves put through the same routine of repetitive torture which more recalcitrant prisoners encounter.





Section 12: The "Friendly Approach"

The interrogator will continue this pressure until he feels that the prisoner is nearly at the end of his rope. At this point he introduces a psychological gambit which is probably the most successful of any of the tricks at his command. He suddenly changes his demeanor. The prisoner, returned once again to an interrogation session that he expects will be a repetition of torture and villification, suddenly finds that the entire scene has changed. The interrogation room is brightly lighted. The interrogator is seated behind his desk, relaxed and smiling. Tea and cigarettes are waiting on the table. He is ushered to a comfortable chair. The guard is sent away, and sometimes the secretary also. The interrogator remarks about his appearance. He is sympathetic about the discomfort which he has been suffering. He is sorry that the prisoner has had such a difficult time. The interrogator himself would not have wished to do this to the prisoner - it is only that the prison regulations require this treatment, because of the prisoner's own stubbornness. "But let us relax and be friends. Let us not talk anymore about crimes. Tell me about your family" - and so on. The usual line is to the effect that, "After all, I am a reasonable man. I want to get this business over as much as you do. This is as tiresome to me as it is to you. We already know about your crimes; it is a mere formality for you to write out your confession. Why don't we get it over with so that everything can be settled and you can be released?"

Prisoners find this sudden friendship and release of pressure almost irresistible.* Nearly all of them avidly seize the opportunity to talk about themselves and their feelings, and then go on to talk about

* One former prisoner in a debriefing interview described his reaction thus "Well, I went in and there was a man, an officer he was. He was alone in the room



their families. Most of them proceed from this almost automatically to giving the information which the interrogator seeks. Even if they do not provide everything the interrogator wants at this time, he may continue his friendly demeanor and the relaxation of pressure for several more sessions before resuming the old regimen of torture. But if the prisoner does reveal significant information and cooperates fully, the rewards are prompt and gratifying. The interrogator smiles and congratulates him. Cigarettes are forthcoming. There is a large meal, often excellently prepared and served; and after this the prisoner returns to his cell and sleeps as long as he likes, in any position that he chooses.

---

in the first place...he asked me to sit down and was very friendly...It was very terrific. I, well, I almost felt like I had a friend sitting there. I had to stop every now and then and realize that this man wasn't a friend of mine. I was - it was, it was - it - I can't tell you how, but it made a tremendous impression on me...It was almost like seeing one of my old friends...almost like being relaxed...I had to extremely careful not to, not to, just do anything he wanted to do...I also felt as though I couldn't be rude to him. I don't know why, but I felt that way. It was much more difficult for me to-well, I almost felt I had as much responsibility to talk to him and reason and justification as I have to talk to you right now."

Section 13: The Course of The Interrogation

Such friendly and rewarding behavior will continue for several days--usually as long as the interrogator feels that a significant amount of new information is being produced. At this point the prisoner may conclude that his ordeal is over; but invariably he is disappointed. For as soon as the interrogator decides that no new information is being yielded, the regimen of constant pressure and hostile interrogation is resumed. Again it is carried to the point at which the prisoner is near breakdown. Again it is relaxed, and again the prisoner is rewarded if he cooperates. In this manner, proceeding with regular steps, alternating punishment with reward, the prisoner is constantly pressed to revise and rewrite the protocol until it contains all the statements which the interrogator desires, and is in a final form which meets with his approval.* When it has at last been agreed upon and signed, the pressure is relaxed "for good"; but the prisoner continues to live in his cell, and continues under the threat of renewed pressure, until such time as he has been taken before a "court", has confessed, and has been "sentenced".

Throughout the entire interrogation period, the prisoner is under some form of medical observation. Prison physicians are familiar with all the effects produced by KGB procedures, and evidently they are skilled at judging just how far the various procedures can be carried without killing or permanently damaging the prisoner. Prisoners who have been beaten have their wounds carefully dressed. Those who are forced to stand for long periods of time are examined periodically during the procedure. Sometimes the physician intervenes to call a halt if he feels the prisoner is in danger. The unintended death of a prisoner during the interrogation procedure is regarded as a serious error on the part of the prison officials.

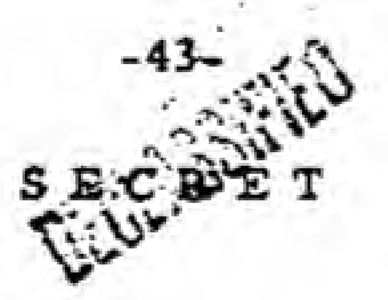
*If the interrogator is seeking information which has been withheld, he proceeds in the same manner.



Section 14: The Psychological Interaction Between Prisoner and Interrogator

During the interrogation the psychological interaction between the prisoner and the interrogator is perhaps even more important than the physical aspects of the procedure itself. It has been said that the interrogator approaches the prisoner with the assumption that he is guilty. It is important that we define this statement precisely. It does not mean that the interrogator is not aware of the "true facts" of the situation but that he interprets them in the light of Communist ideology. The KGB officer is a Communist. He has selected this prisoner from one of the groups of suspects described earlier. The man was arrested because the KGB, which represents the Communist State, regarded him as a menace to the Party or its program. Anyone who is a menace to the Party is, by definition, guilty of threatening the security of the Communist State. Ergo, from the Communist point of view, the man is "guilty". In other words, the KGB has decided that this man must be dealt with in some manner, "for the good of the State." Once the man has been arrested this point is no longer open to question. This is the true or "esoteric" meaning of the frequently repeated Communist statement that "In a Communist state, innocent people are never arrested." If one accepts their definition of "guilt" and "innocence", this is indeed a fact.

However, the interrogator frequently does not know just what specific major "crimes" the man may have committed. In fact, KGB officers have stated quite clearly that most of the people whom they arrest have not really "committed" any specific serious crimes at all. But they do know that the prisoner has "committed" some acts which are contrary to the broad Soviet laws against political crimes, as well as minor "actual" crimes. Furthermore, experience has taught them that if they put enough pressure upon the prisoner, sooner or later they will get him to "confess" to "acts"



which can be interpreted as a "major crime". Once this confession has been obtained, the KGB can demand from the "judge" a punishment equivalent to that which it intended that the prisoner should receive when it arrested him.

This can be illustrated by an analogy. Let us suppose that the United States had a secret police system that operated on the same principles as the KGB; and let us suppose that the secret police decided that all persons who exhibit Communist sympathies are a threat to the security of the country and should ipso facto be imprisoned or executed. An officer might then receive a report that a certain citizen was sympathetic to Communism. He might institute a surveillance of this man and gather a dossier on him. Soon he would have a list of instances in which this man had talked to other people of Communist sympathies, and perhaps attended meetings at which these people were present. He would also probably obtain evidence that this man had from time to time violated traffic laws, made erroneous income tax returns, and moved without notifying his draft board. The officer would then go to his superiors and point out that the man was of known Communist sympathies, had Communist associates, and had violated a number of laws. On this basis, the man would be arrested and interrogated. At the time of arrest the officer would know that his victim was by definition an enemy of the state. Under the pressure of an interrogation procedure such as that used by the KGB it would be not too difficult to get the man to admit that he had indeed associated with people of Communist sympathies, that he had occasionally made derogatory remarks about the President, that he had contributed to organizations on the Attorney General's subversive list, and that he had violated the laws of the United States. He could be made to sign a statement to the effect that this was treasonable activity which tended to subvert the U.S. Government. Thereafter, he would be



liable to punishment for the crime of treason.

Much of the activity of the interrogator can be looked upon as a process of persuasion. In the words of a former interrogator, "The primary work of the interrogator is to convince the prisoner that what he did was a crime." Having got the "evidence" from his informers and from the prisoner, it is up to him to persuade the prisoner that certain actions which he has carried out constitute a crime. The prisoner is usually prepared to admit that the acts have been carried out. Often as not, he revealed them freely because he did not consider them to be criminal. It is up to the interrogator to make the prisoner see that these acts do constitute a serious crime, and acknowledge this by signing a deposition and making a confession in court if necessary. The Communist legal system requires that this be done before a case can be settled.

The fact that the interrogator is a dedicated Communist makes his task of persuasion somewhat easier. This is why ideological studies are regarded as such an important part of the training for interrogation. The interrogator approaches the prisoner with the knowledge that the man is actually a criminal by Communist definition; and he has a large body of convenient Communist definitions and rationalizations to help him in convincing his victim of this. For example, according to Communist theory, acts are judged by their "objective effects" rather than by the motives of those who committed them. Thus, if a prisoner, through an honest mistake, has damaged a piece of machinery belonging to the State, he is a "wrecker". Objectively, he has wrecked an important piece of property belonging to the State. The fact that he did this with innocent motives is not a consideration. Thus a "mistake", and "accident" and a "crime" all become the same thing.



Likewise, according to Communist theory, a man's acts and thoughts are judged "consequentially". Thus, if a prisoner is known to have said that the KGB is too powerful, the fact that he has said this may make him a "traitor" and "saboteur". The Communist reasoning is that a man who says that the KGB is too powerful, believes that it is too powerful and will ultimately act upon this belief. This ultimate act will constitute sabotage and treason; therefore, the man is a saboteur and a traitor. Similarly, a man who has friendly associations with foreign nationals must have some friendly feeling toward them; foreign governments are capitalist and imperialist; a man who is friendly to foreign nationals is giving help to the agents of capitalist imperialism; therefore, the man is a spy whether he realizes it or not.

Such peculiar twists of Communist logic are difficult for Western prisoners to accept at first. Usually they object strenuously to these definitions of "treason", "wrecking", and "sabotage"; but ultimately, under constant pressure and persuasion, a prisoner usually agrees to some statement to the effect that, "By Communist laws I am a spy." Thereafter, there follows further argument and persuasion to the effect that a person is judged by the laws of the country in which the crimes are committed. Ultimately the qualifying phrase is omitted, and the final deposition contains the simple statement, "I am a spy."

This final acceptance is also a consequence of the reduction of critical judgement induced by the fatiguing and debilitating pressures described earlier. In some cases the prisoner seriously begins to doubt his own memory. This feeling is heightened by his inability to recall little things like the names of the people he knows very well or the date of his birth. The interrogator frequently senses this feeling of doubt and uncertainty and tries to exploit it by a clever line of questioning.



Many of these KGB officers impress the prisoner by the sincerity of their dedication to Communism and its ostensible ideals. The interrogator often displays a patient sympathy which becomes apparent to the prisoner. His attitude that, "This is something we must go through with and neither you nor I can stop until you have cooperated and signed a proper confession", is to some extent a genuine attitude. The KGB system allows for no other solution from the interrogator's point of view. It is in fact true that the interrogation will have to go on until a proper deposition has been signed. The prisoner often comes to recognize this sincerity. Many see that indeed the interrogator must follow the system, and there is nothing which he can do about it. Thus, the prisoner, in his need for companionship, may displace his hostility from the interrogator to the "system". Many interrogators genuinely plead with the prisoner to learn to "see the truth", to "think correctly", and to "cooperate".

The warm and friendly feelings which develop between the prisoner and the interrogator may have a powerful influence on the prisoner's behavior. Not infrequently, the prisoner develops a feeling that the interrogator is the only warm and sympathetic person in the hostile and threatening world in which he exists. If the interrogator rejects the prisoner or implies that he disapproves of him, the prisoner may feel bereft. He may blame himself for having let the interrogator down or for not having cooperated with the man who was trying to help him. His efforts to maintain his good standing in the eyes of his "friend" become an important motive for him to seek a rationalization which will allow him to produce a protocol of the type his "friend" needs.





Section 15. The Reaction of the Prisoner to the Interrogation

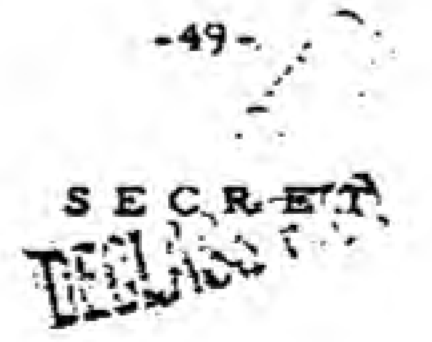
The way in which a prisoner reacts to the whole process of interrogation is to a great extent dependent upon the manner of man he is, his pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, and the circumstances surrounding his arrest and imprisonment. All prisoners have this in common: They have been isolated and have been under unremitting pressure in an atmosphere of hostility and uncertainty. They all find themselves in a dilemma at the time that the interrogation begins. The regimen of pressure and isolation has created an overall discomfort which is well nigh intolerable. The prisoner invariably feels that "something must be done to end this". He must find a way out. Death is denied to him. Ultimately, he finds himself faced with the choice of continuing interminably under the intolerable pressures of his captors, or of accepting the "way out" which the interrogator offers. The way out is a rationalization. It allows the prisoner to meet the demands of his interrogator by degrees, while at the same time retaining within himself some shred of belief that by his own standards he has not capitulated. With rare exceptions prisoners always accept this way out, provided the pressures are sufficiently prolonged and intense, and the interrogator can appropriately adjust his persuasiveness.

Various categories of prisoners respond to different types of persuasion. Persons who have been life long members of the Communist party are familiar with the Communist concept of "crime" and the functions of the KGB. Furthermore, they have all been trained in the ritual of self-criticism, confession, punishment, and rehabilitation, which has been part of Communist procedure since before the revolution. Many Communists can rationalize a belief that they



are actually criminals as specified by the KGB, and come to see their punishment as necessary for the good of the State and the Party. To the true party member, such martyrdom carries with it an air of triumph.

Those who have studied the Purge Trials of the old Bolsheviks are convinced that this form of reasoning was behind their apparently peculiar behavior at the trials. These men held nothing sacred but the Party. They had dedicated their lives to the principle that the Party could do no wrong. They themselves looked upon deviationists as criminals worthy of the ultimate punishment. Zinoviev, Kammenev and their followers knew themselves to be chronic oppositionists. Lenin had expelled them from the party during the 1917 revolution and had reinstated them after they had confessed and recanted. In 1927 they had again been expelled by the party, and temporarily exiled; they had made abject recantations, and had again been reinstated. But these men were chronic non-conformists. In some way, by their attitudes rather than by any deed, they had continued to be in partial disagreement with Stalin and other members of the party leadership. When they were arrested in 1936, it is said that the NKVD did not have very great difficulty in convincing them that they were criminals. They readily agreed to it. There was more difficulty in convincing them that the good of the party demanded that they be publicly tried and executed; but after much tortuous logic they accepted this also. It is said that the interrogators and prisoners broke down and wept together when the final agreement was reached. Their "confessions" before the court contained an exposition of their crimes of which they were guilty "according to Communist theory", expressed as if these crimes had "actually been committed" in the Western or popular use of the word: whereas they were actually only "objective" or "consequential" crimes, as defined



by the Communist theory.

Non-communist prisoners of idealistic beliefs or socialist sympathies apparently make ready targets for the logic of the interrogator. Such persons are usually compelled to agree that the ostensible and idealistic motives of the Communist Party are "good", and that those who oppose these ideals are "bad". The rationalization in this case takes the form of getting the prisoner to say that the Communist Party has the same value system that he does. Something which the prisoner has done is "bad" by his own definition. From this point the prisoner proceeds through the usual steps to the ultimate signing of the deposition.

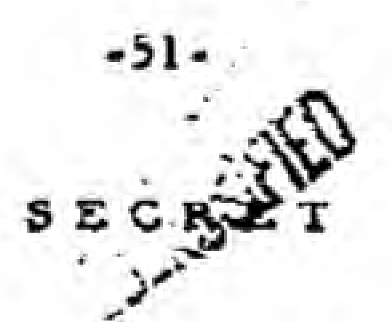
Persons who carry with them strong feelings of guilt associated with highly organized systems of moral values likewise become ready targets for the persuasion of the interrogator. Very few people are entirely free of guilt feelings, but often such feelings are found in the highest degree in those whose objectives and behavior are beyond reproach. For example, many strongly religious people have a profound sense of sin. They feel guilty of shortcomings of their own which are much smaller than those found in most of their fellow men. They constantly see themselves as transgressing their own moral code, and in the need of forgiveness for doing so. Skilled interrogators make use of this. They point out that many of the ostensible ideals of Communism are the same as the ideals to which the prisoner himself subscribes. Since he has transgressed his own code, he is a criminal in Communist eyes also. It is not hard to show the prisoner many points at which he has failed to live up to the Christian code. It is usually not very difficult to create within him a feeling of guilt about this. From here, it is also not difficult to get him to agree that because of his un-Christian acts, he has injured "the people", whom Christ loved. The Communist party is also

interested in the welfare of "the people"; therefore, all the prisoner needs to do is confess that he has sinned against "the people" and has committed crimes against them. A confession of "crime against the people" is a satisfactory confession in a Communist court.

An additional vulnerability of highly moral people is that they find it difficult to tell a lie under any circumstances. Priests, for example, often give aid and comfort to those oppressed by Communist states. It is not too difficult for the police to find out about this, and it sometimes is very difficult for the priest to lie about it when presented with the evidence. From this point, it is not difficult to persuade the priest to confess that he has indeed given comfort to the enemies of the regime.

On the other hand, persons with so-called sociopathic or psychopathic personalities who have a few or no moral scruples are vulnerable because they can be bribed, in a sense, to take the easy way out. Under pressure they quite readily reveal the information they possess and freely implicate their associates. They readily rationalize the necessity for finding a "way out" of their situations and have little or no conflict about deserting any principles which they were supposed to possess. They need only to see what the KGB wants in the form of a "confession" in order to fabricate one without compunction. KGB officers are not entirely taken in by this lying. They do not hesitate to use the "confession", but they edit out the more fantastic parts from the final deposition.

Obviously, persons who are "caught with the goods" receive short shrift with the KGB interrogator. If the KGB has uncovered real evidence of espionage, it is quite likely that sooner or later, with constant pressure and interrogation, the prisoner will admit it also. In this instance, the facts of the case are agreed upon by all concerned, and it only remains to



to determine the punishment.

The maze in which any prisoner finds himself has so many ramifications that it is almost impossible for him to escape from it without signing a protocol and being convicted. Anything he has done may be a crime. He has been adjudged guilty before his arrest. He is put in a situation of intolerable pressure. It is made clear to him that his only way out of this situation is to cooperate with the interrogator. He is offered a reasonable rationalization for doing so. Sooner or later under these circumstances, the prisoner and the interrogator almost inevitably come to an agreement upon a deposition which satisfies the interrogator. But not inevitably: there are reported instances of prisoners who have refused to sign any form of deposition, and have remained in detention indefinitely, with their cases still unresolved, or have been tried summarily by an administrative court of the state police. Those who have escaped to tell about such experiences are few, but KGB officers say that it is not a rare occurrence to encounter a man who refuses to confess properly. Gomulka resisted the Polish UB. Elizabeth Lermolo,(*) a woman who was implicated in the Kirov murder, resisted the NKVD and later escaped. It is alleged that she remained in detention, with periodic interrogation from 1936 until 1941, when the Germans overran her prison and she was released. It is said that she never signed a deposition. Whether this is a true story or not is not known. But it is known that of all the millions who passed through the hands of the NKVD during the time of the purges, and who have fallen into the hands of its successors since then, few have escaped without

(*) Lermolo, Elizabeth, Face of a Victim, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1955.





signing a deposition which amounted to a confession of crime, as crimes are defined in Communist Russia. One former KGB officer stated that "less than one percent" of prisoners of the KGB fail to sign a protocol of some sort. The small number who do not include men seized "by mistake" and released, and others who are liquidated or otherwise punished even in the absence of a protocol.

Section 16: The "Trial"

When the prisoner has finally reached the point of admitting his "crimes", and he and the interrogator have agreed upon a protocol satisfactory to both of them, he experiences a profound feeling of relief, which is sometimes shared by the man who has been questioning him. Even though his crimes may be serious and the punishment for them severe and of unknown degree, he welcomes a surcease from the unrelenting pressures and miseries of the interrogation procedure. Whatever the future may hold for him, he has for the moment found a way out of an intolerable situation.

When a satisfactory deposition has been prepared and signed, the pressures upon the prisoner are customarily relaxed. He is allowed to sleep as long as he wishes; he may have reading and writing material in his room. Sometimes he can join with other prisoners in periods of exercise. His meals improve and his guards become friendly or even solicitous. This easy treatment is continued until he is thoroughly rested and his health has been restored. Then, in most cases, he is taken before a "court". The state prosecutor presents the court with the signed protocol and questions the prisoner about his crimes. Sometimes a "defense attorney" is assigned; this man invariably limits himself to requesting leniency from the court. The whole procedure is usually brief and formal. There are no verdicts of "not guilty". The function of the judge is solely that of presiding over the trial and passing upon the prisoner a sentence which has usually been agreed upon beforehand by the prosecutor and the KGB officer in charge of the case.

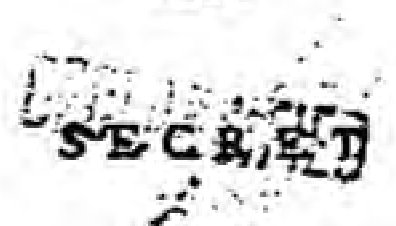
It is this aspect of the proceedings which is most bewildering to Western observers. It is easy to understand how prisoners can be tortured into signing confessions of crimes which they did not commit, but it is difficult to understand why the

prisoners do not renounce these confessions later at the public trials.

Beginning with the Purge Trials of the 1930's, the NKVD and its successors and offspring in Russia, the Eastern European satellites, and China have presented the world with a series of public trials at which the prisoners calmly and seemingly without coercion make outrageous "confessions" of unbelievable crimes, praise their captors, and ask for the most severe punishment for themselves. These prisoners have included important Communist officials, former NKVD officers, non-Communist citizens of various categories, and foreigners of the most diverse backgrounds. All of these prisoners were apparently "innocent"; some faced certain death, and many were profoundly anti-Communist. Men of the highest calibre and integrity such as Cardinal Mindszenty, William Oatis and Colonel John Arnold seemed to have the strongest possible motivations to resist; but none of them stood up in court and denounced the confession and his captors. This phenomenon demands an explanation.

The explanation is available but it is not simple. It is necessary to examine the proposition in detail in order to view it in its proper light.

First, it is by no means true that "all prisoners confess freely at a public trial." Only a very small minority of prisoners of the Communist state police ever appear at a public trial. The proportion of those tried publicly is exceedingly small. The information available leads to the conclusion that the KGB will not expose a prisoner to a public trial unless it is convinced that he will go through with his confession as planned. If there is any doubt about this, no public trial is



held.* But even with this precaution the KGB is not infallible. At the Purge Trials several of the prisoners tried to recant parts of their confessions. When a prisoner tried to recant, the prosecutor halted the examination of that person. Usually, when the man returned from his cell several days later, he was again docile and cooperative. In the Bulgarian Trials, for example, Traicho Kostov repudiated his entire protocol on two occasions.** Some of these so-called "public trials" have not actually been public. They have been carried out in the presence of a select audience while movies and recordings are made of the prisoner's words which are later transmitted to the public.

The majority of prisoners do "come to trial", but these trials are not public. They are held in camera. The state police are concerned only with political crimes and espionage. Their prisoners are tried before "Military Tribunals", which are not public courts. Those present are only the interrogator, the state prosecutor, the prisoner, the judges, a few stenographers, and perhaps a few officers of the court. At such a trial there is no opportunity for "public protest", and any protest which is made can be readily expunged from the record. So far as the prisoner is concerned, this so-called trial appears as

* One police official says "Not over 2 or 3%" of confessions could be used for a public trial.

** Trial of Traicho Kostov and His Group, Sofia, 1949

nothing more than the next step in his process of imprisonment. He has remained entirely in the hands of his interrogators and guards with access to no one else. When he finally comes before the court he sees no one new except the state prosecutor, the judge, and the court officials. The defense attorney, if one is assigned, shows not the slightest interest in refuting any of the evidence in the confession or in establishing a plea of "not guilty". He never questions the fact that the prisoner is guilty as charged. Sometimes he asks the judge for lenience; but not infrequently he informs the court that he is convinced the prisoner is just as big a monster as the prosecution says he is and that he cannot bring himself to ask the court for leniency. The judge likewise shows no interest in the question of guilt or innocence. He limits himself to maintaining order in the court and passing sentence. If the prisoner has any illusions that the prosecutor, the judge, and the defense attorney are going to allow him any opportunity to dispute the facts in the case these are soon dispelled.

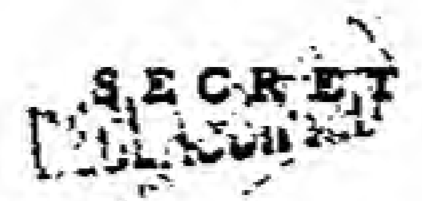
By no means do all prisoners receive a trial of any sort. Those who are stubborn or repeatedly recant their confessions during the interrogation procedure will not be trusted even at private trials. Uncooperative and stubborn prisoners and those who might make embarrassing statements are "dealt with administratively". For many years the state police have had the right to carry out administrative trials for any prisoners whom they do not wish to expose to the usual trial procedure. These administrative trials consist of simply presenting the prisoner to a group of three senior police officers (the "Troika") who pass sentence immediately and have it carried out forthwith. These administrative trials took place within the detention prison. Sometimes the prisoner was not even present at them; sentence was passed by the Troika merely upon the basis of the signed protocol.

Sometimes the alleged records of these trials were made public, but generally the fact that such a trial had taken place was never revealed. For every Soviet citizen who has appeared at a public trial there have been thousands who have been tried only at private trials by military tribunals, and hundreds who were dealt with administratively by the police themselves. Thus, a great number of high Communist officials, captured German officers, and similar prisoners who fell into the hands of the Russian secret police, were not tried at all. So far as the public was concerned, they merely disappeared.*

* During the last few months there have been press reports that the right of administrative trial has been withdrawn from the KGB. It remains to be seen whether or not this is true.



MORI DocID: 18246



Section 17: Public Confessions

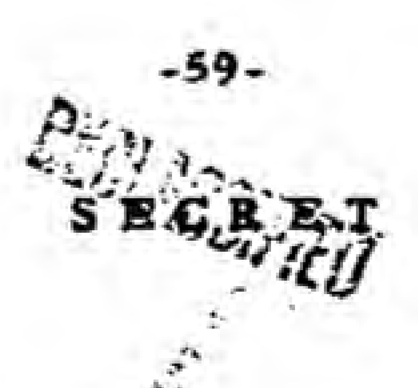
If we exclude from consideration all those persons who are dealt with administratively, two questions remain: Why do all of those prisoners who are tried in private confess almost without exception? Why do some prisoners confess at public trials where there is actually some opportunity to make an open denial of guilt?

In response to the question of why prisoners at private trials confess almost without exception the following answers can be given:

(1) The setting of the private trial as we have just described it makes it apparent to the prisoner that any attempt at recantation is useless.

(2) The prisoner at a private trial is always under actual threat by the KGB. The officer in charge of his case has clearly indicated to him that any attempt to alter or recant any part of his confession will lead to an immediate resumption of the interrogation-torture regimen. This threat is as poignant as a cocked pistol. The prisoner has just finished being carried through torture and interrogation over and over again to the point at which it is absolutely intolerable to him. He has already decided that, whatever his sentence may be, he prefers to receive his punishment rather than to return to the horrible ordeal through which he has just passed.

(3) Positive feelings and even a warm relationship between prisoners and their interrogating officers often develop during the interrogation process, and many prisoners come to trial with the feeling that, if they attempt to alter their testimony, they will be dishonoring an agreement with their interrogators. (See Sec. 14, page 47.)

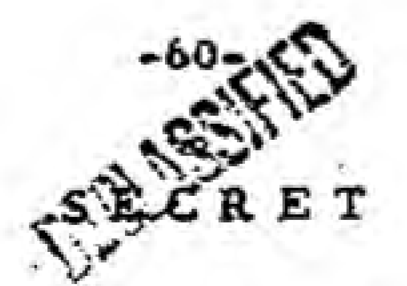


(4) Finally, it is to be emphasized that in spite of all of these detriments, some prisoners do recant at their private trials. The court then decides that these prisoners have not yet reached a full awareness of their crimes. They are sent back to the detention prison, and once again put through the torture-interrogation regimen. Sooner or later, they learn that pleas of "not guilty" are not acceptable in Soviet courts, and that they must behave themselves at their trials. Otherwise, they are indefinitely detained or executed.

In answering the question of why some prisoners confess publicly when there is some opportunity for them to renounce their confessions and thereby embarrass their captors, one must consider the various categories of those who have been tried in public. Widely publicized trials are staged by the Communists only under exceptional circumstances and always for propaganda purposes. They are carefully managed "set pieces" in which every performer must play his role exactly as prescribed. The KGB and other Communist police organizations select the prisoners for these shows with great care.

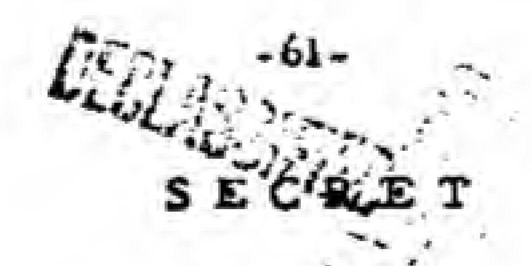
The first category of those who have made public confessions are prominent Bolsheviks who have fallen from grace: Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharin, Radek and their associates at the time of the great purges; more recently, Laslo, Rajk in Hungary, Traicho Kostov in Bulgaria, and Slansky, Clementis and others in Czechoslovakia. The list is extensive, but not nearly so extensive as the list of prominent Communist officials who were liquidated administratively.

But why did these confess, who did so? The old Bolsheviks "confessed" primarily because they were lifelong, dedicated Communists. They had committed their lives to the belief that nothing is



sacred but the Party, and the Party is always right. If there be a central point in the Communist creed, it is this. These men all subscribed to the belief that opposition to the party line, as expressed by the party leaders, is a crime. Whatever else they were, they were "chronic oppositionists", and knew themselves to be so. They all subscribed to the Communist ritual of public self-criticism and punishment. Nearly all of them had at one time or another publicly criticized themselves, and had been punished. Several had been expelled from the party, not once, but several times. They all knew themselves to be in opposition to the Party leadership, and they all felt guilty about this. In spite of this, they still considered themselves to be Bolsheviks, and were prepared in principle to accept any demand which the party might make upon them, even to the point of death.

All of the evidence points to the fact that the NKVD, using the interrogation pressure process which we have described, persuaded these men to accept the concept that because they were opposed to Stalin, the leader of the Party, they were wrecking the Party. As good Bolsheviks, the Party called upon them to make the ultimate sacrifice by denouncing themselves and giving up their lives so that the world could know that opposition to the Party leadership was both criminal and futile. The "crimes" to which they confessed publicly were not "actual" crimes in the Western sense of the term, but were "objective" or "consequential" crimes which must result from their opposition according to Communist theory. Ultimately they made their confessions almost with an air of triumph, and went to their deaths seeing themselves as martyrs to the cause to which they had devoted their lives. Some of them - Krestinsky, for example - had difficulty, recanted a bit, and defied the prosecutor briefly; but after a few days of persuasion they resumed their roles and carried the trial through to its end.



This behavior on the part of the highly disciplined and religiously dedicated "old Bolsheviks" is not unusual in the annals of human behavior. It is not inexplicable that these men who hated Stalin nevertheless played their roles, and went to their deaths for the sake of the Party. The reader has but to consider how many soldiers, in wars throughout the course of history, have proceeded to certain death in response to what they knew to be stupid and disastrous orders, given by incompetent officers whom they hated; and how many wives have spent a lifetime in supporting and defending drunken and brutal husbands, whom they detested. People dedicated to a cause will destroy both their lives and their reputation for it. That Communists will do this we know well from our experience in this country. The Rosenbergs could have escaped death had they been willing to confess to their espionage and reveal their contacts, but they refused to do so.

The information available to us about the trials of the Communists leaders in the Eastern European satellites indicates that their behavior can be explained on the same basis as that of the old Bolsheviks. These trials were not the success that one might assume from their awesome popular reputation. Rajk confessed obediently and went to his death like a proper Bolshevik; but Kostov denounced his accusers and proclaimed his innocence.* The Polish police never dared to expose Gomulka to a trial of any sort. Tito defected and

* Trial of Traicho Kostov and His Group, Sofia, 1949



purged his would be purgers. There have been no truly public trials since those times. The trials of Slansky and his colleagues were recorded in private and selected excerpts of the transcripts were broadcast. Beria and Abakumov were tried entirely in camera by a military tribunal.

Another category of those who have confessed publicly is that group of intellectually or idealistically motivated people who were thought to be opposed to Communism, or at least to be non-Communist prior to their arrest. Most prominent in this group is Cardinal Mindszenty; also included in this are other Roman Catholic priests from the satellite countries.

The Mindszenty case is the best known. In the public mind Mindszenty is the prototype of "Communist brainwashing". The known facts of his case are these:

Cardinal Mindszenty came from an old and aristocratic Hungarian family; he had many friends among the Hungarian aristocracy and the nobility. He had always supported the monarchical form of government. During the period between the wars, when Hungary was a regency, he had been in favor of the restoration of the Habsburgs to the Hungarian throne. He was a man of strong religious convictions, who held himself as well as others to a high code of moral conduct. Governmental administrators sometimes found him a difficult man to deal with because he was inflexible in upholding his moral principles.

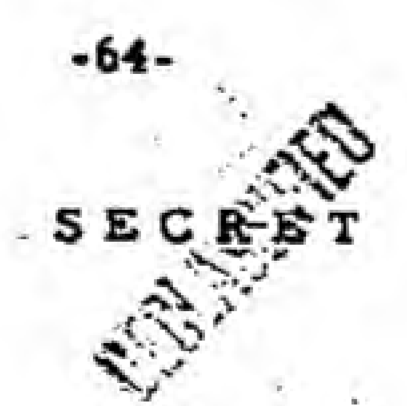
During the Second World War he came into open conflict with the Nazis, and with the members of the Hungarian Fascist Arrow-Cross organization; but these organizations did not dare arrest him because of his position in the church and because of

the respect and admiration in which the Roman Catholic population of Hungary held him. It was partly because he had become such a symbol of the integrity and independence of the church that he was elevated to the position of Cardinal in 1945.

Cardinal Mindszenty did not hesitate to make known his opposition to the Communist regime. He made no attempt to conceal his sympathy for many of those oppressed by it. He maintained his association with his friends among the former aristocracy. He gave support and encouragement to those, both inside and outside of the country, who, he thought, might end the Communist dictatorship and restore a legal government. He was arrested in December 1948 after a propaganda campaign had been carried on against him for several years. Approximately six weeks later, he "confessed" at a public trial. A former Hungarian secret police officer states that the treatment which Cardinal Mindszenty received during his period of interrogation did not differ in any important detail from that which is used by the KGB, which we have described above. The only drugs which the Cardinal received were stimulants to keep him awake during the long hours of interrogation, and possibly sedatives to allow him to sleep when he was exhausted. There is no reason to believe that any new, esoteric or unknown method was used in handling him and no need to assume that there was.

Cardinal Mindszenty's confession is published in the Hungarian Yellow Book. (*) In his published

(*) Documents on the Mindszenty Case, edited by Janos Kovacs; Budapest, January 1949



depositions he acknowledges that he is a royalist, that he had favored the restoration of the monarchy, and that he had hoped that the international situation would develop in a way which would cause the United States to intervene and allow the monarchy to be restored. He agrees that he had continued to communicate with his monarchist friends, both in Hungary and abroad, and with various American authorities. He agrees that he was hostile to the Communist Regime. "It was in the interests of this that I did everything to support American politics in Hungary, partly by my activity against the Hungarian Republic, and partly by constantly urging their interference, by a regular service of facts, and by espionage." This sentence, translated by Hungarian Communists, is typical of those found in Communist depositions; it can equally well be interpreted to mean that Mindszenty had committed espionage (in the Communist sense of the word) or that he had urged the Americans to make known the facts and to commit espionage. The "facts" in the Yellow Book, even if accepted at face value, reveal the Cardinal to have been a Hungarian patriot and a vigorous anti-Communist, but not a spy.

Cardinal Mindszenty's trial was "public", but not all of his statements were broadcast. The broadcast portions were cut, evidently at points where he made significant reservations. But even so, his widely publicized confession was no declaration of profound guilt. At his trial Cardinal Mindszenty stated that he recognized that some of his activities had been contrary to the laws of the Communist state. He stated that he was sorry he had violated the laws. If his actions had in any way harmed the people of Hungary or the Roman Catholic Church, he asked forgiveness for this. He agreed that he would be willing to step aside as leader of the Hungarian Church if this would be in the best interest of the people and the church.



On the basis of this confession the Communists convicted him of being a "reactionary criminal" and of taking part in a "treasonable monarchist plot" to secure United States intervention and to overthrow the government of Hungary. He was sentenced to life imprisonment.

A third category of those who are thought of as having "confessed publicly" were Noel and Hermann Field. The Fields were men with Communist sympathies whose presence in Poland and Hungary was entirely the result of their going to Eastern Europe in order to have a first hand look at the new "Peoples' Democracies". In 1954, Hermann Field was released by the Poles with the statement that his arrest had been a mistake. He then went to Switzerland. He described the events of his imprisonment but has never publicly expressed complaints against the Communist state that arrested him. A "confession" by Noel Field was published by the Hungarians at the time of the Rajk trial. After his release from prison, Noel was seen in a sanitarium by a representative of the U.S. Embassy, but he elected to stay in Hungary. The performance of both of these men is typical of that of Communist sympathizers who are arrested by Communist secret police. They continue to defend the regime and "understand" their arrests in terms of Communist logic.

Still a fourth category of those who have confessed publicly are various foreign businessmen, newspapermen and military men who were arrested or captured in the course of their routine duties, of whom Robert Vogeler in Hungary, and William Oatis in Czechoslovakia are examples.

In all of these cases, the following factors are evident:

(1) The confessions made by the prisoners



were "actually true" in the sense that some of the specific acts described in the confessions actually occurred.

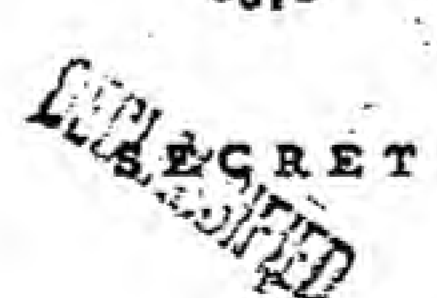
(2) The interpretation put upon these acts was the Communist interpretation.

(3) The prisoner had been brought to agree that in the country in which he was arrested the Communist laws applied and, therefore, these acts constituted a crime. The prisoner, therefore, pleaded guilty to "crimes" which were "crimes" by Communist definition, but which he had not intended as crimes or considered to be crimes at the time that he carried them out. This qualification, however, was missing from the statements made by the prisoners at the trials.

(4) All of these prisoners were under the threat of renewed interrogation-torture if they recanted or changed their confessions.

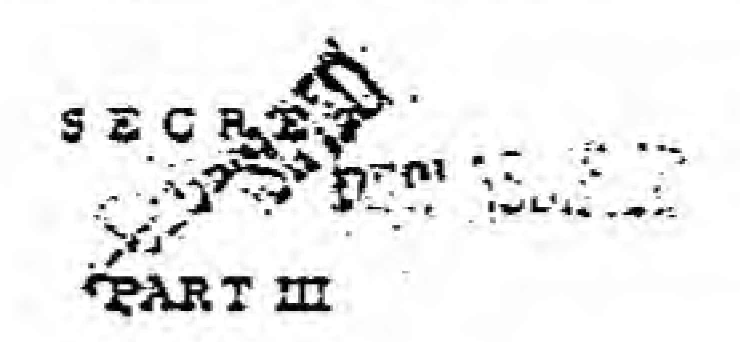
(5) Many of them had the actual or implied promise as well as the firm belief that they would be released if they cooperated with the police.

(6) Furthermore, all of them were able to rationalize that their confessions would not be believed by Americans in any case. This rationalization was essentially a correct one - their confessions were widely disbelieved in the United States; but in some other areas of the world their confessions are accepted as factual.



Section 18: Punishment

The period of interrogation and detention, no matter how long and terrible it may be, is not considered imprisonment. The punishment begins only after the sentence has been passed. Sometimes a "lenient" judge will allow the prisoner to count his period of detention as a part of a prison sentence, but often this period is discounted altogether. According to Communist standards, the purpose of prison systems is to rehabilitate criminals through wholesome work, productive activity, and education. For this "purpose" prisoners are transported to Siberia or the Arctic where most of them spend their terms working in mines and construction projects under brutal and primitive conditions. Those who are fortunate enough to receive any education during this procedure are educated by further indoctrination with Communist ideas.



PART III

PRACTICES IN COMMUNIST CHINA

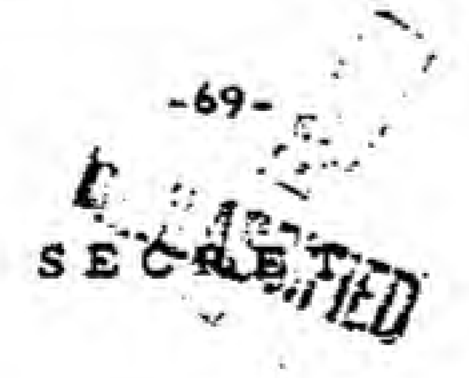
Section 1: A Comparison of Chinese Methods with Those of the KGB

The methods used by the state police in China are basically similar to those used by the KGB, but they are not "carbon copies" like those of the Eastern European satellites. They are different in several important details:

(1) The goal of the KGB detention and interrogation procedure is the preparation of a protocol upon which a suitable punishment can be based, so that the KGB can then deal with the prisoner according to its preconceived idea of what must be done for the good of the Party and the Soviet State. In a minority of cases, this includes a public trial for propaganda purposes. The KGB does not appear to be greatly concerned about the future attitudes and behavior of the prisoner, so long as he behaves properly during the period of trial and sentencing.

The goal of the Chinese detention and interrogation procedure, on the other hand, is primarily that of insuring that the prisoner will develop a relatively long lasting change in his attitudes and overt behavior, which will be sustained after his release, so that he will not again constitute a danger to the Communist state.*

* The official regulations for Chinese detention prisons include the following statement: "In dealing with the criminals, there shall be regularly adopted measures of collective study classes, individual interviews, study of assigned documents, and organized discussion,



The securing of information by interrogation, the preparation of proper protocols and "confessions", and the participation of the prisoners in public propaganda trials, are secondary to this primary goal. **

(2) Unlike the KGB, the Chinese make extensive use of group interaction among prisoners, in obtaining information, applying pressures, and in carrying out indoctrination. The extraordinarily potent effects of the Chinese "group cell" are unparalleled by any Western procedure.

(3) Whereas in the Soviet Union and the satellites the ritual of public self-criticism, confession, self-degradation, punishment, and rehabilitation is a party procedure confined to Communists, the Chinese have extended this practice to the non-party population, and to the prison population in particular, and have made it an important feature of their indoctrination procedure.

---

to educate them in the admission of guilt and obedience to law, political and current events, labor production, and culture, so as to expose the nature of the crime committed, thoroughly wipe out criminal thoughts, and establish a new moral code." Quoted in "Reform through Labor of Criminals in Communist China", "Current Background 293, American Consulate General", Hong Kong September 15, 1954.

** The carefully prepared and provocative review and formulation (A&E Staff/OTR) entitled Brainwashing - A Psychological Viewpoint made a point of separating "elicitation" and "indoctrination" in the Chinese procedures. For analytic purposes this may be a useful distinction, but in practice the two are merged and the process must be viewed as a whole.



(4) In China, at the moment at least, the period of detention is greatly prolonged.* Whereas in the Soviet Union trial and sentencing take place fairly soon after the completion of the interrogation and the preparation of a suitable protocol, in China the preparation of a first confession is only a prelude to a long period of indoctrination and re-education, which may go on for years, and is not terminated until those in charge of the prisoner believe that he has finally adopted a "correct" attitude and behavior. It is only then that the "trial", the "sentencing" and the formal term of imprisonment or other punishment begins.

(5) Procedures in China are much less standardized than those in Russia, and many variations upon them can be expected. This in part may be the result of the newness of the Chinese Communist regime, and the lack of homogeneity of its personnel and facilities.

The Chinese procedures are not, however, a recent innovation. They accompanied the development, prior to the Communist takeover, of a centralized and efficient secret police system similar to that of the Soviets. They also reflect certain aspects of Chinese teaching methods as applied to the particular requirements of the relatively long Communist revolution in China.

* At the present time, it is impossible to determine accurately whether this prolongation is by accident or design. There is some evidence to support the contention that the prolonged period is due to the inefficiency of the authorities in bringing a case to a speedy conclusion. This inefficiency appears to be largely the result of back logs and inexperienced personnel.



For example, in the years from 1936 to 1946, while the Chinese Communists were busy expanding and recruiting new members from the general Chinese population, they gradually developed a highly organized and vigorous indoctrination program. It was aimed at all potential recruits who happened to fall into their hands. Uneducated peasants, city workers, captured KMT troops, and interested students from the Universities were subjects for this indoctrination. In order to create in this heterogeneous group a feeling of comradeship and identification with the peasant Communists, it was necessary to make them "cut their ties to the past". Therefore, the training program included a deliberate assault upon all of the traditional "bourgeois", "reactionary", "upper class" attitudes, beliefs and practices the recruits brought with them. Trainees were forced to abandon their refinements of speech, manner and behavior, their reverence for family ties and worldly goods, and to adopt the crude and earthly attitudes and behavior of the new "people's army." This questioning and discussion of behavior and value systems was accompanied by the inculcation of enthusiasm for the Communist movement built around the ideal of the rejuvenation of China. The combination of Communist practices, such as public confession and self-criticism, with traditional Chinese methods of learning by rote and repetition resulted in a highly effective method of persuasion. These methods, as applied to the general population following the success of the revolution in 1949, have been referred to as methods of "thought reform" or "ideological reform" and, as we have seen, these phrases were finally transferred into English under the generic term of "brain washing". *

* The term "brainwashing" is not used by the Chinese, and should be avoided in intelligence documentation, for it has no precise meaning.



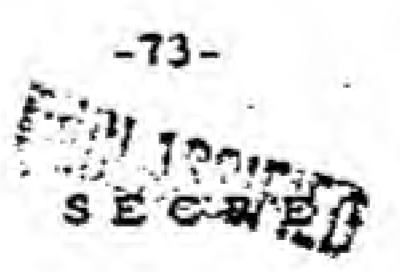
The Chinese have shown great skill in the development of these methods and their application; but like the Russians they developed their methods by trial and error, through practice. There is no evidence that psychologists, neurophysiologists, or other scientists participated in their development.

It should be pointed out that most individuals studied who have undergone Chinese procedures, did so during this period of trial and error. It is significant, that one aspect of "acceptance" of Communist ideals among some in this group was due to the changes that took place during their imprisonment. In 1951 the prison system was still chaotic and plagued with inadequate facilities and limited personnel. As some of these problems were administratively dealt with, conditions in the prisons improved. With this improvement there was concurrent emphasis propaganda-wise that Communism was "improving" China as a whole. The prison improvement, which was within the immediate experience of the prisoner, was accepted as proof of the greater claim. Thus, by accident, two contemporaneous events not necessarily intentionally designed by the Communists combined to produce a significant attitude in the prisoner.

For example, the introduction of the "lenient policy" (see pp. following) is described by all

---

The Chinese phrase is "Szu hsing K'ai Tsao" which means "ideological reform". It is sometimes shortened to "K'ai Tsao" or "reform". As pointed out in the OTR document "Brainwashing - A Psychological Viewpoint" the term as us ed in the popular press applies to a variety of phenomena.



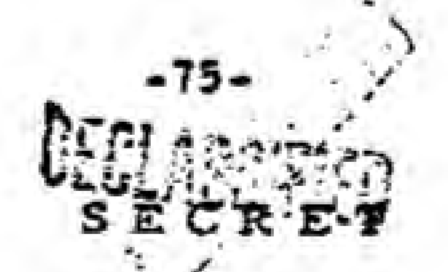
released prisoners as one of the most effective measures for inducing favorable attitudes toward Communism. This "leniency", characterized by gradual improvement in prison conditions, has been interpreted by some observers as one stage in a calculated master-plan for "brainwashing". In fact, however, what occurred was an exploitation by the interrogators of a general improvement in bureaucratic organization, one aspect of which was more efficient prison management.



Section 2: The Suspects, Investigation, and Arrest

In China, as in the Soviet Union, those whom the party decides are a threat to its program automatically fall into the category of suspects. General categories of suspects include: People of "bourgeois" or "reactionary" class background, which includes the "official" class, the rural gentry, and the business and commercial classes of the cities; foreigners, and especially all of those of Western European or American background, and all Christians, especially Roman Catholics, are suspect. As in Russia, there are "specific" suspects as well as general categories of suspects: Persons who are the associates and relatives of other suspects, persons about whom police spies and informers have reported derogatory information, and persons who have been accused of acts or attitudes which threaten the party or any of its programs. In China, as in Russia, nearly anyone in the population may become a suspect, and when he is arrested the police always have some reason for making the arrest, whether or not this is apparent to the victim.

Observations of the investigation methods suggest that they are similar to those used by the KGB. From the point of view of the victim, however, the Chinese investigation procedures do not appear to be as prolonged and comprehensive as those of the KGB and the prospective victim may have much less opportunity to get wind of what is afoot. This is largely due to the fluid state of Chinese society. As Communism is being implemented in a non-Communist area, the number of "reactionaries" and "state enemies" is necessarily extensive and call for rapid action. As the society stablizes more careful methods are demanded.



As in Russia, the arrest procedure is usually carried out suddenly; but the Chinese apparently make no pretense at carrying out their arrests covertly. Often they make a large show of force. The arresting authorities may drive up in a truck with a squad of heavily armed soldiers, surround the home of the victim and cart him off with much military ceremony. If there is a desire to impress the populace, the arrest may be staged in broad daylight under humiliating circumstances. The arresting officers do sometimes read a "warrant" to the victim. As in Russia, this warrant does not name specific crimes but only general ones. The victim is given only a few moments to gather together the barest of his personal essentials before being taken away.

Section 3: Chinese Prison Routine

Usually the prisoner is taken first to a police station, where he is immediately interrogated by several police officers. This initial interrogation is relatively brief and takes the form of an accusation. Usually, it is carried out by three officers in full uniform. Their demeanor is invariably arrogant and hostile.* As in Russia, they never state specific crimes, but they tell the prisoner that he is accused of "crimes against the people", "treason", "espionage", or some similar broad category of malefaction. Sometimes they simply state to him that he knows why he is there, and what has he to say for himself.

Usually this initial shouting and accusatory interrogation is a brief one, and the prisoner is promptly placed in a cell. However, for psychological reasons and be cause of lack of prison facilities, some prisoners are put under "house arrest" immediately after their initial arrest. A single room in the prisoner's home is fixed up as a cell, and guards are assigned. The prisoner stays in this room for an indefinite period of time, and is transported back and forth to the prison for further interrogations (which the prisoners often call "trials".) Under standard conditions, however, the prisoner is confined immediately to a prison cell, and usually goes through an initial period of solitary confinement.

Chinese prison facilities are much more primitive than many of those in Russia and are

*This is particularly true with Caucasians and is probably a manifestation of defensiveness against the so-called class status of the white man in the east.

utterly inadequate to the prison population which they must at present sustain. Crude, improvised, and extremely primitive prison conditions are often encountered.

The Chinese prisons, like the Soviet prisons, are separated into "detention prisons" (often called "Detention Houses") where prisoners are kept during the period of "investigation" up to the time the cases are "settled", and "punishment prisons" and labor camps in which sentences are served. The "detention prisons" in large cities are modeled along the lines of the Soviet detention prisons.

In important cases, when there is a need to elicit a good deal of accurate information from the prisoner, the Chinese utilize a routine of isolation, pressure and interrogation, which is almost identical with that used by the KGB, and described in Part II. The prisoner is placed in a small and barren cell in total isolation. His food, his sleep, his exercise, his position, his activities, and even his eliminative functions are rigidly controlled. After a suitable initial period he is interrogated nightly with increasing pressure until he capitulates. Usually his cell is dirtier and less well heated than those in Russia, and his regimen is different in details, some minor and some major. In China, for example, prisoners in isolation may be required to sleep with their hands inside the blankets rather than outside. The Chinese have a predilection for severely restricting the activities of their prisoners. It seems to be much more common for them to require men in total isolation to sit rigidly on their bunks at all times when they are not eating, sleeping or exercising. This adds greatly to their discomfort.



An aspect of their isolation regimen which is especially onerous to Western prisoners is the arrangement for the elimination of urine and feces. The "slop jar" that is usually present in Russian cells is absent in China. It is a Chinese custom to allow defecation and urination only at one or two specified times each day--usually in the morning after breakfast. The prisoner is hustled from his cell by a guard, double-timed down a long corridor, and given approximately two minutes to squat over an open Chinese latrine and attend all of his wants. The haste and the public scrutiny are especially difficult for women to tolerate. If the prisoners cannot complete their action in about two minutes, they are abruptly dragged away and back to their cells. The guards customarily allow only this one opportunity for defecation, but they may allow one or more other opportunities to urinate during the day.

All Western prisoners experience extreme discomfort and marked disturbances of bowel function when first exposed to this regimen. Many of them think of it as one of the most fiendish tortures devised by the Chinese Communists; but the practice may simply be an old routine which has been customary in China for many years.

Similarly, the diet in Chinese prisons is often regarded by Western prisoners as a device for creating discomfort. Rice, millet and bean soup are the staples. As in Soviet prisons, these are presented to the prisoner in an amount just sufficient amount to maintain his nutrition if he eats all that he is given. Some Western prisoners regard Chinese prison food as nauseating or distasteful and suffer accordingly. However, there is reason to believe that the



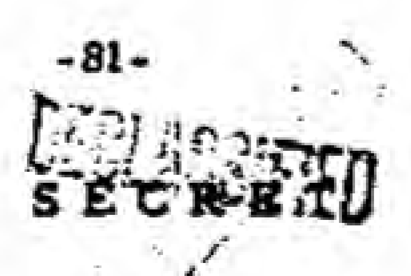
Chinese Communists intend to provide in their prisons a diet equivalent to that of an average Chinese peasant or soldier.

The chief features of the isolation regimen in China are the same as those of the Soviet Union: total isolation, utter boredom, anxiety, uncertainty, fatigue, and lack of sleep, rejection, hostile treatment, and intolerable pressure, alternating with periods of relaxation of pressure, and reward and approval for compliance.

Section 4: Interrogation

The interrogation in Chinese prisons is sometimes carried out by two or three officers; but usually one of these is in charge of the case, and it is he who acts as the "friendly" interrogator at times when pressure is released. As in Russia, there may be only one interrogator, and sometimes two interrogators alternate. These men are relatively junior officers. Like their KGB counterparts, many of them are dedicated Communists; they may approach the prisoner with a set of pre-formed ideas which are impervious to logic. Some Chinese interrogators are University graduates, and some of them have studied abroad; but many others are men whose limited education has been entirely in Communist party schools.

On the whole, Western prisoners have reported that one of the most persuasive features of Communist Chinese interrogators is their evident devotion to their cause, and the enthusiastic idealism with which they subscribe to the ostensible goals of Communism. Their patient attempts to teach prisoners "the right attitude" and to get them to understand the Chinese Communist viewpoint has a potent effect upon unsophisticated or idealistic people. At the same time, the relative ignorance of some of these police officers and their dogmatic adherence to Communist beliefs in the face of obviously contrary facts may be profoundly exasperating. Under the pressures of interrogation, prisoners are usually prepared to admit to acts which actually occurred and in time to accept the Communist definition of the nature of these acts; but they have great difficulty in bringing themselves to make confessions which are wildly contrary to fact. The interrogator may insist upon such confessions because of his erroneous beliefs about the nature of Western institutions and Western motives. This may in part explain why



protocols are rewritten so many times in Communist prisons, and why confessions are so often rejected as unsatisfactory after the prisoner thinks that he has finally written them in acceptable form.

The interrogation procedure is much the same as that used by the KGB. It is usually carried out at night and in a special room; it proceeds stepwise with a gradual building up of pressure upon the prisoner to an intolerable point, sudden release of pressure, friendly interrogation, rewards for cooperation, and then a repetition of the whole process until a presumably satisfactory first protocol is signed. As in the Soviet Union, the Chinese interrogators adjust their attitudes to the type of man with whom they think they are dealing. They are more likely to shout, revile, and humiliate. Possibly they take this attitude more toward Western prisoners than toward members of their own populace. Their procedures seem to be less formalized, and their pressures are more apt to be primitive and brutal. Important or recalcitrant prisoners are usually interrogated during a period of isolation in a detention cell, under a routine similar to that used in Russia. Less important prisoners may be interrogated while incarcerated in "group cells".

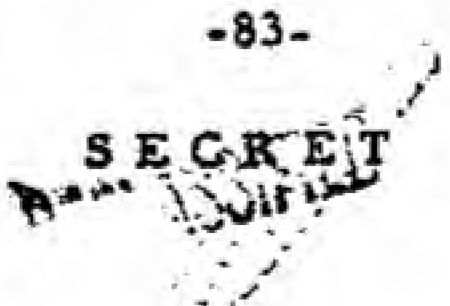
In addition to the procedure of long continued standing (which is frequently used), the Chinese also use manacles and leg chains, devices which are no longer used by the KGB. Leg chains are hobbling and uncomfortable; but the most excruciating discomfort is produced by the manacles. These are commonly in the form of iron bracelets, several inches in width, and joined rigidly together. The prisoner's hands are placed behind his back, and his wrists are locked within the manacles. The rigid joint of the manacles holds his forearms together side by side, tightly behind his back. This position is a painful one to assume for even a few moments. When the man's arms are held



in this position for many hours, he develops almost unbearable pain, primarily in his shoulders and hands. The circulation to his hands is interfered with also. They become swollen and exceedingly tender. The manacles may cut into his wrists and produce wounds which become infected. The Chinese may manacle a prisoner for days or weeks at a time. Such a prisoner is helpless and degraded. In order to eat, he must lie on the floor and lap up his food. He cannot urinate or defecate without help, and frequently he soils himself. He cannot find a comfortable position for sleep. Lying on either side causes pain in the shoulders and lying on his back is impossible because of tenderness of his hands.

Chinese interrogators and prison guards are more likely to resort to direct physical brutality than their Russian counterparts. One KGB officer, when asked to explain the difference between Chinese methods and those of the KGB, said simply, "The Chinese use torture". This is the exception rather than the rule in their behavior, but nevertheless it occurs. Angry interrogators may slap or beat prisoners and kick them in the shins. Guards may do likewise. Among their most sadistic practices are milking the swollen fingers of manacled prisoners and binding the ankles of those who are forced to stand, thereby producing intense pain. It is relatively more common, however, for the Chinese to encourage other prisoners to be brutal towards fellow prisoners. Beating, kicking and slapping is common when Caucasian prisoners are placed in "groups" with Chinese prisoners.

As in Russian prisons, medical attention is given prisoners. This is not intended to be inadequate, but it is usually grossly so by Western



standards. Some Chinese physicians likewise are skilled in estimating the capacity of prisoners to withstand punishment, and usually call a halt to tortures before death or irreparable physical damage occurs.

But the content of the interrogation procedure is not only the tortures which are applied. As in Russia, the persuasion and discussion of the interrogator, which seems to provide a "way out" for the prisoner, is an essential tool in producing the desired confession.

The Chinese more frequently ask the prisoner to write out, rather than relate, his own biography, and often require him to revise it in detail. The interrogation sessions themselves can be taken up with the discussion of this biographic material, but only rarely is the biography itself obtained by direct questioning. All of the psychological devices used by the KGB interrogators are also used by the Chinese interrogators. Night interrogation, with repetitive questioning, undefined crimes, changing attitudes and increasing pressures, alternate with periods of relaxed pressure, "friendship" and reward. Cigarettes, tea and a friendly attitude may be the sum total of a reward for cooperation; but even this provides profound relief from the usual interrogation procedures.

The KGB rarely requires a prisoner to fabricate a completely untrue act which is logically absurd. They concentrate more upon persuading him that his actual acts constitute crimes. Chinese interrogators on the other hand, when they are intent upon establishing charges such as bacteriological warfare or espionage, may insist that the prisoner include in his confession detailed statements which are not only untrue, but logically absurd. One has the impression that this insistence is based upon a

combination of ignorance and ineptitude. Prisoners usually balk at making such statements, and tend to retract them even after they have been made.* This seems to produce a profound exasperation in many interrogators. It is in such settings that much brutality occurs. Men have been kicked, beaten, starved, locked up in small boxes, hung up by their thumbs or legs, or subjected to other primitive tortures under these circumstances. This has happened especially in POW interrogations.

Persuasion and friendly discussion nevertheless play a major part in the preparation of the original confession. The same types of rationalization are used by the Chinese as are used by the KGB, and the peculiar forms of Communist logic are common to both.

* A person who has finally been forced into making an absurd confession will sometimes accept the confession after the most absurd parts have been deleted, even though the remaining protocol is patently untrue.



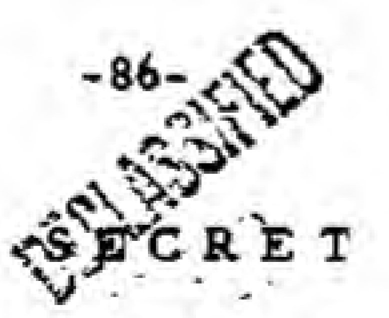
Section 5: The Indoctrination Procedure in the Group Cell*

At the time the first protocol or "confession" is signed, the prisoner is usually sullen and only half convinced, if at all. It is at this point that the Chinese procedure diverges radically from that of the other Communist countries. The Chinese are less interested in immediate trial and punishment; they are more concerned with reforming the prisoner's thoughts and acts.

At some stage in his imprisonment the prisoner can expect to find himself placed in a cell with about eight other prisoners. If he was initially isolated and interrogated, this may be shortly after his first "confession" is accepted; but many prisoners are placed in group cells from the outset of their imprisonment. The cell is usually barren, and scarcely large enough to hold the group it contains. There may be bunks, but more often all of the prisoners sleep on the floor, and when all lie down, every inch of floor space may be taken up. The atmosphere is extremely intimate. Privacy is entirely non-existent. Poor food and all of the other hardships of the prison routine are present, and a new extraordinary hardship is added as well: the psychological atmosphere among the prisoners.

In societies which require a rigid conformity of belief and provide severe punishment for deviation, periods of great fear may be accompanied by widespread hysterical accusations and brutal punishments.

* An excellent description of the atmosphere within the Chinese group cell may be found in Chinese



This has been an outstanding feature of the present Communist Revolution in China. Under the pressures of the Communist demands for conformity and the fear of relentless punishment, men have turned against men, and children against their parents. People compete with each other to demonstrate their loyalty to the new regime, and freely accuse their neighbors of deviations or suspected crimes. The Chinese Communists have fostered this pressure among the general population and use it for their own ends. Certainly, they do so in the prisons. One of their most ingenious prison devices is that of turning prisoner against prisoner, and requiring the enemies of the regime to beat each other into conformity.*

During his original interrogation, as he is urged to confess his crimes, the prisoner is told repeatedly that only when he has completely confessed his crimes and has come to realize the error of his ways can his case be settled. After he transferred to a cell with other prisoners, it becomes clear to him what this entails. It is necessary for him to compete with other prisoners in studying, in thoughts,

Communist "Thought Reform": I Confession-Extraction and "reeducation" in Penal Institutions by Robert J. Lifton, MD - to be published.

* In justice, it should be pointed out that the Communists have been less successful in forming Group Cells made up exclusively of non-Chinese. Where the methods described hereafter were most successful was where the prisoner was relatively fluent

and in behavior until he has demonstrated to them, as well as to his jailors, that he is thoroughly "reformed" and a true adherent of Communism.

The regimen in the new cell is completely organized. The prisoners arise at a fixed hour, have a brief period for cleaning themselves, eat a frugal breakfast, and have the usual march to the latrine. Thereafter, they spend the morning in lectures, discussion sessions, and brief exercise periods. They spend the afternoon in the same sort of routine - more lectures, more discussions and self-criticism sessions. In the evenings, the discussions and self-criticism go on continuously until bedtime.

The lectures are relatively formal study sessions given by an instructor, who is either a member of the prison staff or a prisoner who is further along in his indoctrination. The textbooks are the standard books of Marxist theory.* The lecturer assigns topics

---

in Chinese, and was placed in Group Cells with Chinese prisoners. However, Group Cells were formed of non-Chinese prisoners on several occasions with varying degrees of success.

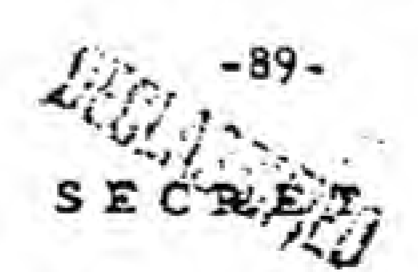
For Example:

* ("The Communist Manifesto"; "Socialism-Utopian and Scientific"; "Imperialism-the Highest Stage of Capitalism"; "Foundations of Leninism"; "The History of Social Development"; Leontiev's "Political Economy"; "The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union")

for reading in these books. These are later on taken up in "discussion sessions". Such group discussions of general topics are designed to assure that everyone understands what he is being taught. On each point it is necessary for everyone in the group to come to precisely the same understanding, which is the one that meets with the approval of the teacher and the more thoroughly indoctrinated students. These sessions are held in the cell. Everyone is forced to participate. Attempts at nonparticipation are noticed immediately by the other prisoners, who then insist upon an expression of an opinion from the recalcitrant member and a thorough discussion and dissection of his views. Prisoners and instructors are equally assiduous at ferreting out other standard devices for avoiding commitment, such as platitudinous statements, or the mere parroting of the words of the instructors and the group without conviction. Prisoners who attempt to escape by the use of such maneuvers find themselves set upon by the other students and sharply criticized for their insincerity.

The exercise period is like that in Soviet prisons. During the earlier phase of indoctrination it usually consists of walking in the prison yard or doing calisthenics. At later stages, more advanced prisoners are permitted to play games such as volley ball or baseball.

Further lectures and more group discussions take place in the afternoon. In addition, there are the "self-criticism" sessions, during which each prisoner is supposed to criticize his behavior in the light of proper Communist behavior, and to admit all of his faults. Not only one's present failures but all of one's past actions are



subject to review. The biographical material from each prisoner's life history is available, and sooner or later he must review most of the items. Furthermore, all prisoners must take part in vigorous criticism of other prisoners. One is not allowed to criticize vaguely or lightly. One must criticize specific points and criticize them forcefully. The result of this is an intense outpouring of hostile accusations upon the prisoner who is the recipient of the criticism. The hostility of the group grows in intensity and continues until the uncommitted prisoner shows a genuine emotional reaction that indicates a satisfying willingness to reform.

A special aspect of the group criticism is what prisoners call "the struggle". This takes place when prisoners are undergoing interrogations while being confined to group cells. The cell group is made aware of the progress of the interrogation, apparently by direct instructions from the jailors to the group leader. When the prisoner returns fatigued after an interrogation session, the group surrounds him and "struggles" to help him with his confession. They stand around him in a group, shouting at him, reviling him, and accusing him for hours at a time, constantly telling him that he must confess all in order to be treated better. Such "struggles" are often initiated when a prisoner returns from an interrogation session wearing manacles and leg chains as a sign of his unsatisfactory performance. When the prisoner finally produces a satisfactory confession and the interrogator changes his attitude, the cell group is made aware of this also, and changes its attitude toward the prisoner to a milder one.



Another technique frequently used is that of stopping all interrogations and instructions for a period of days, and ordering the prisoner to concentrate upon writing his confession and self-criticism. During this time, he is not allowed to speak to anyone in his cell, and his cellmates do not speak to him.

This routine of lectures, discussions, self-criticism, and group criticism goes on from morning until evening throughout the week. The formal lectures alone may occupy as much as 56 hours a week. Literally no part of the prisoner's waking life is left free.



Section 6: The Reaction of the Prisoner to the Procedure in the Group Cell

Whether by design or by accident, the psychological atmosphere within one of these group prison cells is such that ultimately the prisoner comes to see that the only hope for a "solution to his case" lies in his complete conformity in speech and behavior to the doctrine outlined by his jailors. He also learns that he must demonstrate his zeal not merely by his own behavior, but also by vigorously tearing down the defenses of many other prisoners. Fear and tension in the group are thus maintained at a high pitch, and the cell mates vie with each other in accusing, criticizing, degrading, and brutally punishing their fellow prisoners.

A prisoner newly introduced into one of these cells finds himself faced with an almost irresistible assault upon the integrity of his personality. Often he is already tired, discouraged, and psychologically whipped by the previous extraction of a "confession". Furthermore, he is usually somewhat confused about his value systems, and at least partly convinced that, by Communist standards, he is a criminal. He enters the cell as a newcomer and an unregenerate. He finds that his cellmates are all people who have "changed their attitudes". Regardless of their status prior to arrest, they all seem to regard themselves as criminals; some take pride in the fact that they were the worst criminals in the lot. He may be surprised to find that the cell leader who has charge of the discussion and criticism sessions is a former Nationalist officer, or possibly a priest, or a former high Communist official.

The new prisoner's protestations of innocence are not accepted by his fellow prisoners. They derisively tell him that he will soon change. They



all tell him that resistance is useless, that the Communist party is all powerful, and that no one who is innocent is ever imprisoned. They promptly turn upon him and begin to "help him" in his reform. They criticize him vigorously and brutally. They point out every error in his thinking. They detect his every attempt to evade commitment and destroy it. (*) They do not allow protestation of innocence. Thenceforth, he has no moment of peace and no shred of privacy.

The brutalities of prisoners to other prisoners are far more frequent than those of the guards. This is another interesting example of Communist legalism. The Chinese, like the KGB, have a regulation that prisoners shall not be tortured, beaten, or otherwise maltreated. Usually the interrogator and guards follow this rule. They leave physical brutality to the prisoners themselves. Amid the tensions of the Group Cell, prisoners can revile and degrade their fellow prisoners to an unbelievable degree. When the group decides that a prisoner is recalcitrant or reactionary, they may turn upon him and beat him mercilessly. They may deprive him of sleep, take his food away from him, spit upon him, make him stand all day, and insist that he be manacled. It is said that prisoners have even killed or seriously injured other prisoners. Occasionally the guards even intervene to protect

(*) Various names have been given to the tricks commonly used by prisoners to avoid commitment such as, "finding a loophole," "assuming an appearance," "spreading a smoke screen," "window dressing," etc. Each of these can become a subject for special criticism.



prisoners from their cellmates. Such pressure of prisoners upon other prisoners is intentionally permitted, and is interrupted only when danger to the life of the prisoner, or the policy of the prison officials, indicates that it should be stopped.

Hence, in addition to the physical discomforts inherent in this situation, the prisoner is placed under profound psychological pressure. To reiterate: Man is a social animal. His health is as much dependent upon the maintenance of satisfactory relationships with his associates as it is upon his food and drink. Even if nothing else at all were done to a prisoner, he would find it almost intolerable to be confined so intimately with seven other people who revile him and openly despise him. Some sort of psychological <u>modus</u> <u>vivendi</u> leading to a degree of acceptance is necessary for any man who exists in a group of other men. Absence of such an adaptation is profoundly disturbing. Added to this burden is the fact that the prisoner is a bewildered, anxious, and beaten man from the start. Furthermore, he has no privacy whatsoever. Every moment of his life is spent within a few inches of his fellow prisoners. There is nothing that he can do or say that escapes them. Not even his past and private life is sacred to him. Everything he has ever done or said may be held up before him. On top of all of this he is physically abused, fatigued and degraded to the point of complete collapse; but as in the interrogation situation, he is never allowed to die and is always snatched back just before the final breaking point.

Here ago Her, an intolerable situation in which no man c no man indefinitely. The prisoner must conforr confor emands of the group sooner or later later. ne is amazed not so much at the fac fact th s ultimately conform, as at the



remarkable amount of punishment which some prisoners absorb before they do so. One would think that no man would actively resist these pressures for more than a few months; but even men who were predisposed toward conforming in the first place, have been known to put up some degree of resistance for years before finally conforming in all minor details to the demands put upon them. Even those who have a wholehearted desire to embrace Communism find themselves faced with some demands which they cannot accept, and seem to find it necessary to exhaust themselves in resisting these points before they finally "give in". It is as if the prisoner cannot accept total conformity as a solution until he has convinced himself that it is, indeed, inevitable.

Prisoners who enter into the cell groups may be defiant for a while, but they soon learn that this brings punishment upon them, and they try some trick of ostensible compliance. This is detected, with further punishment and rejection. Other ruses fail also. Finally, many reach a point of emotional breakdown. The mood common to this is profound depression, with crying, whimpering and the loss of all care about personal appearance. Some prisoners become disoriented. Evidently, a few have delusory experiences, but this is less common. Sometimes these emotional disturbances go on for several months, and they may recur.

In this new situation of intolerable pressure, the prisoner is again offered an attractive "way out". This attractive way out lies in the adoption of the manifest ideals of Communism. At the expense of belaboring the point, it must be said again that the "exoteric" or "open" doctrine of Communism is ostensibly an espousal of the ideals of self

sacrifice, equality, peace, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, which are common to most of the major ethical systems of mankind. The prisoner is told, in effect, that the reason he is being punished is that he has failed to live up to this set of ideals. When he realizes his errors, has cleansed his thoughts, and has become a wholehearted believer, his ordeal will end. All of the rationalizations of Communist logic are brought into play to make his conversion easier. From morning until night he has this drummed into him in teaching sessions from which he cannot escape.

Not only do prisoners revile and criticize each other; some of them show a sincere desire to help the new prisoner to "reform" himself. The behavior of prisoners to other prisoners cannot be seen as simply the free acting out of hostility and aggression. Intermingled with this there is a truly sincere desire on the part of some to make the new prisoner see that only by conforming and adopting the proper attitudes and beliefs can he ameliorate his situation. Some of them have sincerely adopted Communism and see themselves as actually trying to make the prisoner into a better person; others see themselves as only trying to get him to do what he must do in order to survive. In all cases this rationalization enables the prisoners to take the attitude that they are "only punishing the new prisoner for his own good". This attitude causes no difficulty for those who are Communists, or who truly regard the new prisoner as a criminal; but it is a source of great conflict for some, including some priests and missionaries, who realize that their efforts to convert the new prisoner may stem from some selfish motives on their own part, and that they have the effect of causing him to deny principles to which they



themselves are dedicated. In any case, the new prisoner does become aware of the fact that there are members of the cell group who have partly concealed sympathy for him, and are sincerely trying to help him. He responds to this offer of help as much as he succumbs to the constant rejection and brutality.

From time to time, he is taken out of the cell to see his interrogator for private discussions and further opportunity to confess. Private persuasion is thus added to group persuasion. The attractiveness of the "way out" is as effective in producing conversion as is the necessity of escaping torture.

The duration of the period of imprisonment in the group cell does not appear to bear any direct relation to the progress made by the prisoner in adopting Communist views. The prisoner may assume that he has been converted, but his mentors are hard to satisfy. The interrogator and the other prisoners make conversion difficult to attain. It is common practice for them to ask for a new deposition and a new "confession" from a prisoner as soon as he appears to have achieved a certain amount of "progress". This new "confession" usually goes so far beyond the previous one that the prisoner has great difficulty in accepting it. This initiates a new period of conflict and resistance on his part, and starts the cycle over again. Western prisoners find it especially difficult when the interrogators ask them to confess to belonging to nonexistent espionage rings, or to make other grossly invalid "confessions".



Section 7: The Conversion

The prisoner faced with a KGB interrogation in preparation for a trial is placed in a position which he must rationalize only a portion of his beliefs and actions in order to reach a tolerable modus vivendi; but the prisoner in a Chinese prison has a much more difficult adaptation; he must rationalize all of his beliefs and actions. It gradually becomes apparent to him that his ordeal may be of indefinite duration, and that there is no escape from it short of complete compliance with the demands of his captors. Sooner or later most prisoners make the necessary adaptation. They come to the point of being able to say and do the things required of them. They are able to change their thinking enough to begin to identify themselves with the values held by the prisoner group.

Here again, the rewards of rationalization help the prisoner, just as they helped him to confess. For example, most people are not without some sense of guilt about parts of their past behavior. Such guilt, possessed by prisoners, is greatly enhanced by the criticism and accusations of their fellow prisoners. Confession, even if it is entered into with some reservations, gives a sense of relief. The feeling of "joining", "belonging" and "being accepted" by the prisoner group provides a most intense satisfaction to one who has been rejected and reviled. Nor is it always very difficult for him to accept the ostensible ideals for which the group is working. Prisoners make rationalizations such as, "After all, Communism and Christianity are essentially the same thing." Or others, such as "I did not think of myself as a spy, but, after all, I am a foreigner and foreigners have done great harm to China." "Well, I felt at



first that all the things I did were perfectly normal information-gathering episodes, done because I was trying to learn everything I could about China as a student. I also knew that a government representative before I left had told me to 'keep my eyes open', although I didn't get paid for this and this was not a real mission. Also I would periodically report to the American Consul and other Western diplomatic acquaintances, various points of information on conditions in my area. Since I was not doing this either for pay nor really systematically organizing to get this information, I felt that I was not spying. I tried to tell them that really in all the information-passing I was quite favorable to them. I told them that I had voted for Norman Thomas (this made them mad). When I went to China, I knew the Kuomintang was rotten. I hoped China would go Titoist and I was trying to get facts for my personal information. However, I had eventually to admit that, by their law and in their eyes, I had been guilty of espionage - and, indirectly, espionage was sabotage of the Chinese people. You see, I was organizing everything I observed in my mind and was planning to tell it or write a report when I got back.

"In the course of my stay as a student, I got 'involved' with some important Chinese officials, and this was bad for me.

"The arguments which eventually won me over were these:

1. Did you give information to various individuals? Yes.

2. Did you ever bribe anyone to get information? At first I said no, but they convinced me that if I offered someone a drink that came



to visit me, and subsequently got information from him - this was a bribe. So I had to admit that I got information by bribing people.

3. Did this information-passing exceed your normal activities as a student? Yes, I had to admit that it did. The Chinese have a very restricted view of a student's pertinent activities.

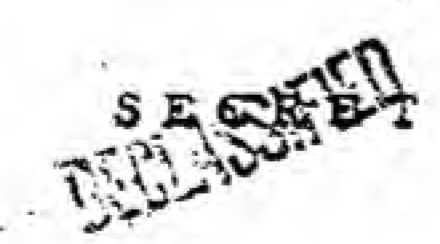
4. If you are in China, shouldn't you be subject to Chinese law and way of looking at things? Yes, I finally had to admit, morally, that this was true.

5. What finally convinced me was much reflection on this question - "What would these activities be considered by you if we did the same thing in the U.S.A.?" This question somehow was the clincher for me.

6. The Chinese emphasized point (3) very much. They said that if I had stayed in my circle of student friends and repeated information to them - this would not be spying. However, if you try to influence people beyond your normal jobs; this was very serious."

All evidences of "reform" and "conversion" are fostered by the patient help and teaching which the prisoner receives from some of his associates, and by the approval of interrogator. When he finally submits, the prisoner receives a substantial reward from a feeling of acceptance and belonging. Suddenly, he has "friends". He may even be a "hero". He unites himself with the others, and is buoyed up by a sense of dedication to the " mission"





that they are carrying out. At this stage, he may be transferred to a "free and easy cell" where conditions are less harsh. Here he has an opportunity for reading, and he may be allowed to teach other prisoners and to take part in games. His new-found enthusiasm is abetted by recurrent "drives" that take place within the prison. - Drives against "hypocrisy," "waste", "graft", "corruption" and the like. - all of which are fostered with enthusiastic fervor by competitions among the cell groups.

Those who have been through the Communist prison procedure often come out with the feeling that no matter how difficult it was, it was worthwhile. They may even feel grateful to their mentors. They feel as if they had been destroyed, and then had been reintergrated. Some feel as if they were more "mature" than they had ever been before. This is especially true of those who had previously felt at loss for a goal in life, or who had not been committed to a set of beliefs, friendships, or an occupation. It is also true of those who have carried a heavy load of guilt about earlier behavior. In this latter group, something akin to a religious "conversion" is recognizable. Such prisoners have experienced a period of degradation and intense punishment which they find not entirely unacceptable because of their pre-existing feelings of guilt and unworthiness; following this, they experience an "acceptance" and "group identification" which is more valuable to them than ever before because of the fact that they have already "confessed" and "atoned" for their sins. The previously uncommitted, and those who felt rejected by their society, may develop an exhilarating feeling of "purpose" and "belonging" which they never had before.

In some instances, the enforced regimen of study and discussion had opened entirely new intellectual attitudes and created confidence in intellectual ability that had previously been lacking. Men living in boredom turn easily to any scheduled escape from their boredom. Some individuals felt profoundly inadequate to the intellectual challenge offered by Communist theory, in the hands of trained Communist dialecticians, and what started originally as a desire to learn turned temporarily to a commitment. This commitment was re-inforced by one-sided presentations and distorted explanations that in situ made sense. Re-entrance into their pre-imprisonment world, however, shattered most of their illusions and, to some extent anyway, the Communists were victims of their own intensity. Almost without exception, relatively unlearned or non-intellectual prisoners returned with a burning desire for further education. The attitudes and experiences of these men, in part, have given rise to the not unwarranted plea for more intensive training in American political "doctrine" or "theory".

Even those prisoners who were previously well integrated and on good terms with their fellow men, and who were committed to certain goals and beliefs, experience a profound feeling of relief when they are finally able to make the necessary rationalizations and to join with the prisoner group.

Long after the prisoner has developed a willingness to conform, he continues to be exposed to an unremitting course of Communist studies. During all of his imprisonment he is denied access to any information which might

contradict what he is being told. Over a period of years this combination of misinformation and absence of contrary evidence produces some areas of distorted belief in even the most skeptical. The vulnerability of these distorted beliefs have already been adequately documented and it can be stated categorically that not one person evaluated in this study underwent a <u>fixed</u> <u>reversal</u> of belief. There was alteration of beliefs in every instance and these alterations were in the main, temporary at best. In many instances, where fundamental alteration of belief took place, this was in favor of Western attitudes and unfavorable to worldwide Communism.

Section 8: The Trial

The period of indoctrination within Chinese detention prisons has been known to continue for as long as four years. A prisoner's release from the detention prison often appears to be decided upon on the basis of general policies rather than any specific aspects of his case. The release of foreign nationals is usually decided upon the basis of propaganda needs or the requirements of international agreements. Often release comes upon a prisoner quite unexpectedly. He is suddenly told that he will be freed. Within a few days he is taken before a "court" which is much like a Soviet Military Tribunal. There is a "judge", a "prosecutor", perhaps a few stenographers, and sometimes a "defense attorney". The prisoner repeats his confession in what he has long since learned is the proper manner. The defense attorney asks for lenience. (There are no pleas of "not guilty"). The judge then passes sentence. If it has been decided to free the prisoner entirely, he is usually sentenced to a term in prison equal to the amount of time he has spent in the "detention prison", and then (if he is a foreigner) to deportation. The "lenient" judge then allows the prisoner to count his time in the detention prison as if it were "real imprisonment", and he is forthwith released. But, if he is "to be punished", he will be sent to a labor camp or to some other punishment institution to begin his sentence.

Section 9: The "Brain Washed"

The people who have been described in the public press as the "most thoroughly brain washed" have been prisoners suddenly released after periods as long as four years in Chinese detention prisons. Such persons have appeared at the border at Hong Kong, looking calm, fit and sane. They praise their captors, praise Communism and damn "American imperialism." It is said that their old acquaintances are amazed, and that their political attitudes seem to have "changed completely". The fact that they praise their captors is regarded as the most amazing of all; for it is known that they have been through many horrible experiences in the course of their imprisonment. It is from this pattern of behavior that the impression has arisen that the Chinese possess esoteric and devilish methods of "thought control" which no man can resist.

A number of the "most thoroughly brain washed" American civilians have been studied intensively. A great deal is known about these people and what was done to them. The study of these people reveals that they possessed certain common characteristics before they were imprisoned. These can be enumerated:

(1) They were people who, long before their imprisonment, were in rebellion against their parents and the way of life to which their parents adhered, including many of its standards, beliefs, and practices.

(2) They were people who had no group of friends within the United States, no American place, organization, or occupation with which they were firmly identified. So far as the United States is

concerned, they were emotionally rootless.

(3) They were people who had previously identified themselves with the "underdog". They felt a strong sympathy for all people whom they regarded as "oppressed" or "exploited," and especially for minority groups of different racial or cultural origin.

(4) They all spoke Chinese fluently, and for many years had had a strong interest in China and all things Chinese.

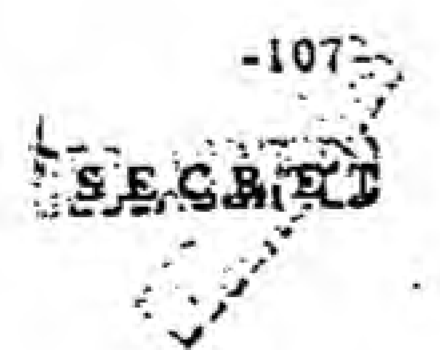
(5) All of them were familiar with the concepts of Marxist socialism, and had been intellectually sympathetic to socialist ideas for many years before their imprisonment. Several of them had been members of Communist and fellow-traveler groups, and at least one of them is believed to have been a party member.

(6) These people had been offered repatriation after the Communist Revolution, but they had elected to remain in China, primarily because they were both sympathetic to the Chinese Communist Revolution, and curious to see how it would work out. They were eager to help develop the new China, if they were allowed to do so. For months prior to the time of their imprisonment, several of them were engaged in studying Chinese Communist literature, and translating it into English.

It seems probable that most of these people were not actually Communist party members before their arrest and imprisonment. They were sympathetic to Communist ideas and to the new China; but they had not committed themselves to Communism.

They had toyed with their beliefs and found them intellectually attractive; but they were content to let their identification remain at this level. They had studied Chinese, and went to Chinese schools; but they continued to associate with the members of the Western colony, and the forms of their lives were those common to expatriate Americans and Europeans living in Chinese cities. At the time of their arrests they were still rootless, uncommitted people.

(7) All these people were arrested on charges which included "espionage". The treatment which they received in prison was that which has been described above. All of these people confessed to "espionage," and after their release some of them continued for a while to state that they had been American spies. None of them had actually committed espionage, and none were actually associated with American intelligence organizations. But all of them had with innocent intent done various things, such as describing economic conditions in letters, or discussing the morale of Communist troops with American consular officials, which were "ostensibly" espionage by Communist definition and which were forbidden by Chinese Communist law. By Communist definition, all of them were of "reactionary background" and "the agents of an Imperialist power", and they had all "committed espionage". During the course of their imprisonment, they "admitted" their acts and accepted the Communist definition of them. The rationalizations which they utilized in making their confessions were like those which have been described above (see Section 16 & 17, Part II).



(8) They were also "converted" to the acceptance of Communist doctrine. That is to say, after much soul-searching and profound emotional turmoil, they committed themselves to have faith in, and work for, the overt Communist ideals which they had previously accepted only on an intellectual basis. Some of them emerged from prison with a sense of purpose and worthiness which they had not felt before.

(9) They continued to hold pro-Communist beliefs for varying periods of time after their release and return to the United States. During this "recuperation" period, primarily characterized by a process of reality testing, the individual reverts to a set of beliefs similar to those he held prior to his imprisonment. In some cases, however, a "conversion in reverse" takes place, in which the individual may become intensely anti-Communist.

Section 10: The Effectiveness of Chinese Communist Indoctrination Procedures

Just how effective are these procedures? How long lasting are their effects? Do they actually effect brain function? Are they "irresistible?" The answer to these questions, like the answer to those about Russian "public confession" trials, is not simple, but it is available.

The Chinese prison indoctrination procedure is never more than partly effective; but it always has some effect on a man. No human can live through months or years of this experience without suffering emotional turmoil. In order to survive and not suffer an emotional breakdown, he must make some rationalization which allows him to identify with the prison group, and to relieve some of the pressures upon himself. The extent of this rationalization need not be greater than a belief that his present situation justifies his present behavior and statements. Usually, it goes further than this. He usually finds some aspects of Communist doctrine which he can admire, and which he can identify with his own beliefs. Also, because of his long period (sometimes years) of incarceration and exposure to propaganda, with a total absence of accurate information from the outside world, he may unwittingly adopt some Communist beliefs about current events. On some other questions, he may have at least a tentative acceptance of Communist attitudes because he has been presented with a great deal of plausible propaganda "evidence."

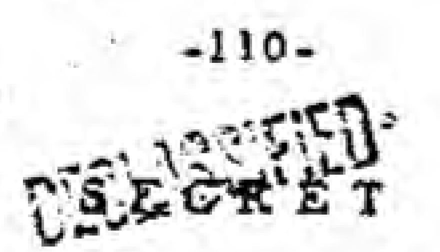
Thus, a man who spends a long period in a Chinese Civil prison and survives can be expected to have experienced anxiety, despair and doubt; he must have compiled with the prison rules; he must have

"confessed" to something; and he must have taken part in the various aspects of the indoctrination procedure. If the procedure was as vigorous and thoroughgoing as that described above, he must have shown enough evidence of conversion to satisfy his cellmates and jailors; and this usually means that he must have found at least some part of the Chinese Communist value system which he can identify with his own and tentatively accept.

But on the other hand, even though some of his attitudes and beliefs may have changed, his capacity to think is not altered. So called "brain washing" produces no permanent changes in the function of the brain. Any form of imprisonment may induce a prison psychosis, and inhuman treatment may produce physical damage to the nervous system; but these effects are not peculiar to "brain washing."

Nor is there any unexplainable deficiency in the memory of former prisoners. Prisoners do not remember things which happened when they were delirious or otherwise psychotic. They may forget minor details of their experiences with the passage of time. Many of them do not wish to discuss some points of their treatment, because the memories of these are painful, and the discussion of them is disturbing. But even the "most brain washed" are capable of a vivid recollection of what occurred during their imprisonment.

Furthermore, the majority of those released carry with them an intense bitterness about some part of their imprisonment. Sometimes this is directed at certain other prisoners or jailors, but frequently it may be directed at the whole Communist system. All prisoners come out with a

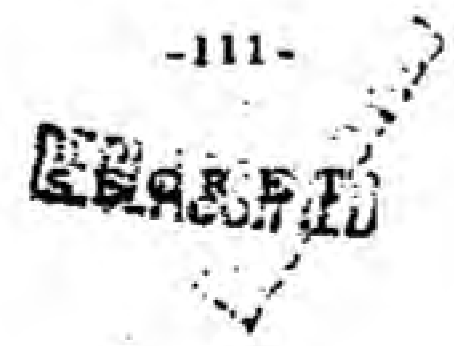


realization that they have been cut off from the Western world for a long time, and with some suspicion that not everything in the outside world will turn out to be as it was presented to them in prison. All of them have a tentative orientation toward whatever new beliefs they may have, and most of them have reservations about their entire experience.

Upon their release, former prisoners set about a process of "reality testing." Without committing himself, each newly released man characteristically begins to talk to friends, and to listen to accounts of what has happened while he was away in prison. He begins to read back copies of books and magazines. He begins to compare what was told him with the facts as observed and reported in the American press. The available evidence suggests that within a period of months he readjusts himself to the outside world and resumes a set of beliefs roughly similar to those he held prior to his imprisonment.

Where there are detectable differences, they seem to take the form of greater maturity in thinking, a more critical approach to beliefs formerly taken for granted, and a desire to learn more about the issues on which they were "taken in" by their interrogators. In some cases a "conversion in reverse" may be anticipated, characterized by an intense antagonism to Communism in practice.

Thus, it is quite erroneous to think that those who have experienced prison indoctrination in Communist China emerge as thoroughly indoctrinated Communists who express praise and admiration for their captors. Such people are as unusual as the public confessors in Russian purge trials. The vast majority of released prisoners say little or nothing. What pro-Communist beliefs they have they keep to themselves and express only in private. Many are bitterly anti-Communist. Although they are willing to admit that





here are good aspects about the regime, and agree that they cooperated and "confessed" while in prison, they do not have any genuine identification with Communism.

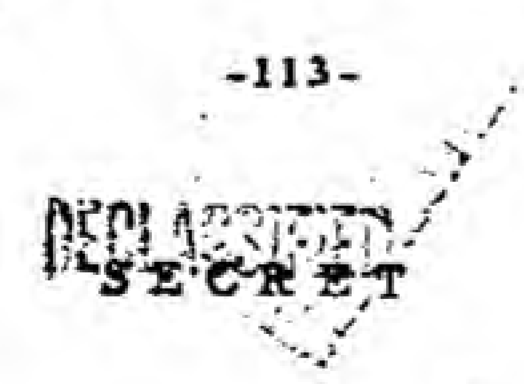


PART IV:

A Theorectical Analysis of the Effects of the Communist Interrogation-Indoctrination Process

A central theme of this paper has been the proposition that there is no need to assume that the Communists utilize occult methods in managing their prisoners. The results obtained are readily understandable on the basis of nefarious but well known police methods used. Theory has been avoided because many present-day concepts of human behavior are still in a formulative state. Notwithstanding this, there is a sufficient body of evidence to allow us to explain why the results obtained flow from the methods used.

The Communist arrest-imprisonment procedure has the effect of seriously disturbing man's total relation to his environment. It produces many disturbing and unpleasant sensations. In the description of the procedures of arrest, isolation, interrogation and torture, it was mentioned that these produce anxiety, fear, tension, resentment, uncertainty, loneliness, boredom, fatigue, sleeplessness, hunger, coldness and pain. A similar pattern of reaction has been observed in various experimental studies of pain, sleep deprivation, sensory limitation and so forth. The first part of this reaction is a period of patient and purposeful exploratory activity. The man carefully tries every possible solution to the situation which may relieve him of the pressures upon him. If one arranges the experimental situation so that the man cannot find a satisfactory solution by his exploratory activities, his next reaction is an increasing and random exploration, with a general increase of motor



activity, and an overflow of this activity into other behavior of a non-purposive nature. He appears to "become excited" and shows evidences of anxiety, hyperactivity, and sometimes panic. If the pressures of the experimental situation are continued, the hyperactivity of the subject will gradually subside, with the exception of isolated repetitive acts . He may settle upon one form of response which he repeats endlessly and automatically even though this endlessly repeated action can never produce a solution. If the pressures are continued long enough, his ultimate response is one of total inactivity. He becomes first exasperated and finally dejected and dependent upon anyone who offers to help him. He becomes unusually receptive to approval or human support.

For want of a better term the experimental situation just described has been called a "situation of frustration". Situations of frustration are the common denominator of many of the Communist prison experiences. The reaction of the prisoner to the isolation routine closely reproduces that which occurs in an artificially frustrating situation. It is a more all-embracing reaction, slower in its development and more devastating in its effects, but it is basically similar. Situations of frustration also occur in the interrogation situation, where the prisoner must prepare a satisfactory confession and finds that no matter what he does or says he cannot satisfy the interrogator. Likewise, situations of frustration occur again and again in a group cell in the Chinese prison. Here also the prisoner finds that no matter how much he attempts to comply with the demands of the interrogator and the other prisoners, his confession is never satisfactory, and his ordeal is renewed.



The Communist interrogation and indoctrination programs have much in common. In all of them the subject is faced with pressure upon pressure, and discomfort upon discomfort, and none of his attempts to deal with his situation lead to amelioration of his lot. Psychiatrists may refer to a man in such a situation as "emotionally bankrupt". Some of the patients who seek the help of psychiatrists are in a similar state. The pressures and convolutions of their lives have reached a point at which they can no longer deal with them, and they must have help. It is recognized that such a state of "emotional bankruptcy" provides a good opportunity for the therapist. A man will not turn to a therapist for help as long as he feels that there are other means of deliverance.

When a man is at the "end of his rope", he accepts avidly any help that is offered. In the experimental situation of frustration, the subject who has reached this stage will readily accept suggestions for solving the experimental problem, however absurd. His response to words of encouragement is striking. Similarly, the patient who has reached a point of desperation may abjectly put himself into the hands of a psychiatrist toward whom he has previously displayed contempt and hostility, and he will enter into a course of treatment however painful it may be.

A characteristic of those who are "bankrupt" and need help is their need to talk. They obtain deep satisfaction simply from unburdening themselves to another human being. In Communist prisons this need to talk is greatly fortified by the regimen of total isolation. This is an important reason why the Communist interrogator, being the only man to whom the prisoner talks, is in such an advantageous position for obtaining information from him. The interrogator is dealing with a man who might be looked upon as an



intentionally created patient; the interrogator has all of the advantages and opportunities which accrue to a therapist dealing with a patient in desperate need of help.

Although the Communist management of prisoners was not designed by psychiatrists or neurophysiologists, and those who carry out this management do not have formal psychological training, nevertheless the interrogator does deal with the prisoner by using many of the same methods which the physician uses in the management of his patient. He allows the prisoner to talk at length about his family and his life. This tends to produce in the prisoner a warm and dependent relationship toward him. The interrogator approves and rewards proper attitudes and behavior and disapproves and punishes improper attitudes and behavior. Because of his dependence upon the interrogator the prisoner develops a desire to please him. The prisoner glows when he is rewarded, and is disturbed when he is rejected.

The interrogator has in his hands knowledge of most of the life history of his victim. He does not hesitate to pick out from this history the disturbing and unpleasant episodes. He uses them as a lever to humiliate the prisoner and to increase his feelings of guilt and unworthiness. The potent effect which this procedure can have upon a man has been demonstrated many times in the laboratory. It has been observed that when threatening episodes from a patient's life are introduced by the physician and discussed intensively with indications of disapproval, the patient may be greatly disturbed. Not only his mood and behavior are disturbed, but profound and potentially dangerous alterations in his bodily processes occur, also. Thus, the power which the interrogator possesses in dealing with the prisoner



is great; his ability to manipulate both the physical and interpersonal aspects of the prisoner's environment place his victim in a highly vulnerable position.

Furthermore, the interrogator frequently takes the prisoner through a series of confessions. No matter what the prisoner writes in his first protocol, the interrogator is not satisfied. The interrogator questions every sentence. The prisoner is forced to argue against every change, every demand for increased self-incrimination. Eventually t e prisoner has begun to argue for maintaining statements that he would not have accepted prior to the commencement of the interrogation. Every time that he gives in on a point to the interrogator, he must rewrite his whole confession. Still the interrogator is not satisfied. In a desperate attempt to maintain some semblance of integrity and to avoid further compromise, the prisoner must begin to argue that what he has already confessed is true. He begins to accept as his own the statements he has written. Step by step, he begins to believe some of what he has stated. By this process identification with the interrogator's values and beliefs takes place.

It is readily understandable, therefore, that the prisoner ultimately adopts the suggestions of the interrogator with regard to the protocol. It is not at all incomprehensible that some prisoners can be carried to the point of confessing to crimes for which death is the certain punishment. And finally, since the intimate interpersonal relation between prisoner and interrogator continues through the period of the trial, it is also understandable that prisoners may continue to play their prescribed roles before the judge and the state prosecutor.

The situation within the group prison cell in the Chinese prison is akin to that of the



interrogator and prisoner. Here, the important relationship is between the prisoner and the group, with the prisoner striving to gain the acceptance of the group and to identify himself with them. In this setting the pressures are more prolonged and the situation of frustration may be repeated many times, because the prisoner is called upon not only to accept a protocol or confession, but to adopt a whole new attitude. It may take a long time before such a state of utter defeat is achieved, but when it is, the prisoner's reaction has many of the features of a religious conversion.

Those who have experienced a true religious conversion maintain their new attitudes and behavior for an unpredictable length of time. It has been a general experience that most of the religious conversions experienced at camp meetings or revivals are of evanescent nature. The experience is a powerful one, but the convert usually reverts to his former pattern within a matter of a few days. But this is not necessarily so. Some religious conversions have long lasting or even permanent effects. So it appears to be with the conversion which takes place in Communist prisons or indoctrination schools with reinforcement can be provided by the society in which he is placed. Those who go through the experience often feel that it was unpleasant but worthwhile. Its effects upon their attitudes and behavior, however, are usually evanescent.

